The Science of Order: Essays on Institutional Power and Social Control in County Durham

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For Millie and Jake

Cover image: Thomas Corsan Morton (1859-1928) - A Cathedral City, Durham - 1774

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Introduction.

This collection explores the mechanisms of institutional control and the lived experience of the North East of England across several centuries. They are briefly summarised as follows:

From Dark to Light: The Life and Times of George Parkinson of Sherburn.

This article examines the social and cultural history of the mid-Victorian Durham coalfield through an analysis of George Parkinson's autobiography. It explores the 'Methodist Ascent'—the moral and social transformation of miners through the Chapel—while triangulating the theories of Max Weber and Émile Durkheim.

The Merchant of Pain: St Godric, Somatic Capital, and the Political Economy of Grace at Finchale.

This study challenges traditional hagiographical readings of St Godric of Finchale by applying a sociological and economic understanding of his life. It argues that Godric

utilised his "Merchant Habitus" to trade physical suffering for "Somatic Capital" and spiritual grace.

Watchmen of the Shrine: Medieval Private Policing at Durham Cathedral.

This essay re-examines the administration of St Cuthbert's shrine as an early form of private security and civil administration. It utilises Foucauldian concepts to demonstrate how the Benedictine monks functioned as wardens of the body, using panoptic surveillance and forensic intelligence to manage the population.

The Patriotism of the Pew. The Dean of Durham, The Priest, and The Dead: A Critical Analysis of the 1923 War Memorial Dispute.

This is a critical analysis of a battle over the ownership of memory following the First World War. It examines the rebuttal of Father George Wheatley against Bishop Welldon's questioning of Catholic loyalty, using a "Discourse of Sacrifice" and local "Rolls of Honour" to claim full citizenship for his community.

Ribbons of Dismissal: Gender, Labour, and Social Control in the Durham Women's Land Army.
This micro-historical analysis investigates a 1919 ribbon-presentation ceremony as a "ritual of dismissal". It explores how civic rituals were used to demobilise women workers and restore pre-war gender hierarchies by framing resignation as a matter of "honour".

The Mitre, The Migrant and The Map: The Science of Police in Victorian Durham City.
Drawing on a rescued 19th-century "beat complaint" register, this final essay explores the "Science of Police" in Victorian Durham. It details how the uniformed constabulary and sanitary inspectors imposed a moral and physical geometry on the city to protect the interests of the ecclesiastical and social elite.

While these six papers span nearly a millennium—from the medieval hermitage of St Godric to the post-war industrial landscape of 1923—they are unified by a focus on the "Science of Police" in its broadest sense. This collection demonstrates that the administration of order in County Durham was never a purely secular endeavour,

but a sophisticated synthesis of spiritual authority and bureaucratic discipline.

From Dark to Light: The Life and Times of George Parkinson of Sherburn. A Window into the Victorian Durham Coalfield.

Introduction: The Virgin Soil of New Lambton.

This paper examines the social and cultural history of the mid-Victorian Durham coalfield through the lens of George Parkinson's autobiography, 'True Stories of Durham Pit Life'.[1] Born in New Lambton, County Durham, in 1828, Parkinson represents a transitional generation of miners who moved from the unregulated, perilous conditions of the 1830s—characterised by 'trapper' child labour and primitive ventilation—to the organised self-reliance of the late Victorian era. By analysing key chapters of his memoir, this paper explores three central themes: the physical reality of pre-mechanised mining; the role of Primitive Methodism as a vehicle for working-class education and leadership; and

[1] Parkinson, G. (1912) *True Stories of Durham Pit Life*, London: Methodist Publishing House. All subsequent page references are to this edition. Online at: https://www.hettonlocalhistory.org.uk/membersarea/documents/TrueStoriesOfDurhamPitLife.pdf

the origins of the region's welfare institutions, specifically the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund. The paper also identifies Parkinson's personal connection to the poet Dora Greenwell, revealing the real-life inspiration behind her celebrated dialect poem, 'The Pitman to His Wife'.[2]

Finally, the paper triangulates the sociological theories of Max Weber[3] and Émile Durkheim[4] to argue that Parkinson's life exemplifies the dual forces of the 'Methodist Ascent': the internal 'rationalisation' of the individual miner and the external creation of social solidarity in the face of industrial trauma. I use this term, Methodist Ascent, specifically as a sociological concept to

[2] Parkinson, pp. 83–89. Parkinson's account provides the biographical context for the poem, identifying the speaker as Mark Pratt of Sherburn. The poem was subsequently published in Dora Greenwell, *Songs of Salvation*. London: Strahan & Co., 1873.

[3] Weber, M. (1922) *Economy and Society*. University of California Press.

[4] Durkheim, E. (1915) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain. London: George Allen & Unwin. Interestingly, although the English translation is 1915, the original French text (*Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*) was published in 1912—the exact same year as George Parkinson's *True Stories*. Accordingly, they are twin texts of that specific historical moment and events that are meaningful coincidences.

describe the upward social mobility and moral transformation experienced by working-class miners in the 19th century through their involvement with the Methodist Chapel. In the context of George Parkinson's life and this paper, it refers to three specific shifts:

1. **From Illiteracy to Education:** Miners like Parkinson and others started as illiterate child labourers. The Chapel provided the motivation and the means (Sunday Schools, Bible study) to learn to read. Parkinson's journey from a 'trapper boy' to a man buying a dictionary and reading Greek history is the literal 'ascent' of the mind.
2. **From 'Rough' to 'Respectable':** It describes the shift from the 'rough' culture of the early coalfield (gambling, drinking, cockfighting) to the 'respectable' culture of the Victorian era (sobriety, thrift, family discipline). This connects directly to my Weberian analysis: the internal discipline ('rationalisation') of Methodism allowed miners to accumulate 'cultural capital' and financial stability.
3. **From Labourer to Leader:** The Chapel gave working-class men positions of authority—as lay

> preachers, class leaders, or Sunday School superintendents—that were denied to them in the workplace. Men like George Parkinson became community leaders who could police social behaviour and organise welfare systems, like the Relief Fund, effectively rising above their station as mere 'hands' in the pit.

I would not want, however, to simply interpret Parkinson's life and what he, and others achieved, as purely the result of the ascent of a religion. Their progress was also, fundamentally, attributable to their resilient human agency and the *personal* determination which existed in their nature and characteristics to improve themselves and their families.

The history of the Durham coalfield is often written from the perspective of the great institutions: the Union lodges, the colliery owners, and the acts of Parliament. However, the lived experience of the early Victorian miner—the texture of the darkness, the specific sounds of the pit, and the internal emotional life of the colliery village—is harder to reconstruct. It is in this gap that George

Parkinson's autobiography, published in 1912 but recounting a life begun in 1828, proves invaluable. Parkinson anchors us immediately in a specific time and place: New Lambton in 1837. He describes a landscape that would be unrecognisable to the modern eye, where the industrial and the pastoral sat side by side. New Lambton was, in his words, 'a prominent feature of a picturesque landscape'[5] lying between Houghton-le-Spring and Warden Law. Yet, this rural idyll masked a spiritual and educational vacuum.

He notes that the village was virgin soil for the Methodist evangelists because the Anglican parish churches were simply too far away—two miles to Houghton-le-Spring or Penshaw, and three to Chester-le-Street. This isolation meant that for the mining families, the pit was the only reality. The arrival of the red-tiled brick building of the Methodist chapel did not just bring religion; it brought

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[5] Parkinson, p. 5. For a comparative official account of child labour in Durham during this period, see: *Children's Employment Commission: First Report of the Commissioners (Mines)* (London: HMSO, 1842). Parkinson's account of the 'trapper's hole' closely mirrors the testimonies given to Commissioner J.R. Leifchild in 1841.

the only alternative centre of civilisation, education, and community structure available to the working poor. Parkinson's narrative is not merely a memoir; it is a testament to the Methodist Ascent. He belongs to a generation that transitioned from illiterate child labour to educated community leadership, and his life story serves as a microcosm for the maturation of the Durham mining community itself.

The Boy in the Dark (1837–1840): The Descent into the Abyss.

Perhaps the most technically valuable contribution of Parkinson's early chapters is his detailed description of the loop method of descent into the mine—a terrifying practice that predated the introduction of safety cages. To the modern reader, familiar with the enclosed cages of the 20th century, the idea of lowering a nine-year-old child into a mine shaft on a chain seems horrific. Yet, Parkinson describes it with the matter-of-fact tone of an engineer, albeit a scary experience. He recalls his first descent at age nine. There was no cage; instead, a long chain hung from the rope, adorned with hooks. Two men would place a leg through a loop in the chain, grasping

the iron with their arms. A boy would then sit astride their knees or, if he were brave, cling to the chain himself. On his first ascent, Parkinson's abject fear is well-defined:

> On the morning in question, however, a corf filled with bricks hung from the end of the chain. My father seated himself on this, and the banksman lifted me on beside him. I grasped my father with one hand and the corf bow with the other, while he drew me closely to him with his free arm. My heart beat rapidly; a strange tremor crept over me as the corf swung gently to and fro over the mouth of the pit, and I ventured one look over the side, only to see the terrible depths of darkness into which we were about to descend. The creeping sensation seemed to rise from my toes to the topmost hair of my head. The engineman gently drew us up a little, and then reversed the engine. We suddenly dropped out of daylight, and the words, O mother! involuntarily escaped my lips. My father heard and, drawing me closely to him he said in the pitmen's vernacular, 'Dinnet be flaid, hinney, aw hev had o' the!' Confidence and

> trembling, however, were strangely mingled as down, down, and still down we went, amid the clanging of the pumping apparatus behind a wooden partition in the shaft. (sic).[6]

This was not merely a commute; it was a daily act of survival. The creaking of the pulleys and the rushing noise of falling water created a sensory overload that remained with him for seventy years. Crucially, the system relied on human strength and trust; the boy had to hold on, and the man had to hold the boy. It was a visceral introduction to the camaraderie of the pit.

The Trapper's Reality.

Once at the bottom, Parkinson's role was that of a 'trapper'—the lowest rung on the mining ladder. His father hewed out a hole behind the props for him, where he was to sit for twelve to fourteen hours a day. His duty was simple but vital: to open the ventilation door for the horse-drawn wagons and close it immediately to preserve

[6] Parkinson, pp 18-19. The 'loop' method of descent was common in the North East coalfield before the widespread adoption of the safety cage in the 1850s.

the flow of air. The material culture of his childhood is catalogued with touching precision. He was not sent to the pit empty-handed. His grandmother provided him with the essential kit of the pit boy: a ‘good door-string,’ six ‘farthing candles,’ and ‘currant bread’ for his 'bait'. The grandmother’s insistence that ‘the poor bairn might have plenty of light’[7] speaks volumes about the primary fear of the miner: total darkness.

Parkinson does not shy away from the psychological toll of this isolation. In a striking anecdote, he recounts another moment of sheer terror when, sitting alone in the dark, he saw a glowing ‘white thing’ appearing on the wall. Terrified that he was seeing one of the ‘haunts’ or ghosts that the older miners spoke of, he was paralysed with fear:

> After being a week or two at work, I sat one morning behind my door. For some time, no one passed my way; my candle burned out, and I was in total darkness. As I sat musing alone my eye was

[7] Parkinson, p.16.

> attracted by something white about two yards from me, and the longer I gazed at it the clearer and brighter it seemed to become. What it might be I could not imagine. I had heard people talk of 'haunts' and 'ghosts, and I thought that surely this must be something of the kind……. Fear began to rise and deepen every moment, till I was quite terror stricken, and for some time must have remained in that condition. How long a time passed I cannot say, for the terror left no room in my mind for anything but the appearance before me.[8]

The revelation that the 'ghost' was merely decaying wood with phosphorescent fungus, often called, 'fairy gold' by miners, did not diminish the fear; it merely gave it a rational explanation. Parkinson's ability to turn this into a game—cutting slices of the shining wood to create a starry firmament—is a powerful reminder that these miners were children, finding playthings in the grim reality of the mine.

[8] Parkinson, p. 25.

The Rough Diamonds of the Coalfield.

Parkinson moves away from the technical details of mining to provide a series of affectionate portraits of the men he calls the Methodist pitmen of that day. He argues that these men were a special type of character—shrewd, kindly, and sincere—that had, by 1912, largely vanished from the earth. For the modern historian, his book offers a rare glimpse into the internal social dynamics of the colliery village, revealing how illiterate men educated themselves and policed their own community disputes.

'Old Joe' and the Economics of Faith.

Joe Humble, 'Old Joe', is a figure who embodies the transition from the wicked miner to the respectable community leader that he eventually turned out to be. Joe's story is also particularly valuable for its details on the economic uncertainty of the 1840s. Parkinson notes that before his conversion, Joe was a Roman Catholic who knew nothing of the Bible, but his life was transformed when he hid under a ladder at a prayer meeting. However, the most significant historical detail in Joe's story is the account of his accident. Parkinson writes that Joe broke his leg and was out of work for nineteen

weeks. In an era before the Welfare State, Parkinson notes starkly: 'Friendly Societies were not then as they are now.' Describing a handcart of food sent by a shopkeeper he relates how neighbours' kindness prevailed in the absence of organised welfare:

> Presently she comes back, and the shop-lad win her, wi a handcart, and he brings in a bag o' floor and some parcels. She says, 'Joe, there's somebody been at the shop last night; aw cannot tell when it is, but he's paid for us a fortnight's groceries and floor.' 'Aw watched her,' said Joe. 'Aw saw the poonds o sugar, and the butter, and the bacon, and the coffee, and the soap, tea, and some currants; and she says,' 'Noo, what dis thoo think o' that, Joe'? 'Wey, aw'll tell thoo what aw think, Sallie. Aw like the Lord te mak my marketin a good deal better than thoo'. (sic).[9]

Although these groceries appear to have been given free, in other cases it was common practice for a shopkeeper

[9] Parkinson, p. 37.

to send groceries without demanding immediate payment when someone was in financial difficulties. Such examples serve as case studies in the informal social safety nets that kept mining families alive. It was a credit economy built on reputation and religious affiliation.

The Rationalisation of the Pitman.

From a sociological perspective, the transformation of men like Old Joe offers a striking case study of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber argued that Protestant asceticism—specifically the Methodist emphasis on sobriety, thrift, and discipline—inadvertently prepared working-class individuals for economic stability.

In Parkinson's narrative, we see the 'rationalisation' of the miner's life. Before his conversion, Joe's life was impulsive and chaotic; after conversion, it became disciplined and credit-worthy. The shopkeeper's willingness to extend credit was not based on Joe's income, which had vanished due to injury, but on his reputational capital as a Methodist. Thus, the Chapel did not merely save souls; it instilled a 'this-worldly

asceticism' that allowed miners to survive the economic volatility of the coalfield. Parkinson's memoir serves as evidence that for the Durham miner, the path to respectability was paved with the discipline of the Methodist Connextion.[10]

The Pitman's Pulpit: Newark Featonby.

Newark Featonby represented the vocal authority of the Chapel. Parkinson devotes an entire chapter to this local preacher. Like Parkinson, Featonby entered the pit at an early age, working sixteen-hour days. Yet, the Chapel provided him with a platform to become a community leader whose influence rivalled that of any colliery manager. Parkinson describes him as a "man of grit, physically and mentally", was "low in stature" but had a well-formed head.[11] He was a local preacher known for his "ready utterance" and "intense earnestness". He spoke in the northern pitman's dialect, which made him incredibly effective at connecting with miners. Parkinson

[10] 'Connexionalism' refers to the way in which Methodist churches and other institutions are connected and work together to support one another, share resources, and carry out mission and ministry.

[11] Parkinson pp. 99-116.

notes that when Featonby was scheduled to speak, there was 'sure to be a good congregation' and 'no chance of an after-dinner nap.[12]

Parkinson describes visiting Featonby during his last illness. In a moving scene, the dying preacher asks Parkinson to find his long pipe and tobacco on the mantelpiece. He smokes one last pipe while Parkinson reads him a hymn 'Thou knowest, Lord, the weariness and sorrow'. This humanises him—he was a holy man, but still a miner who loved his pipe.[13]

Featonby is significant to the sociologist because he preached in the northern pitman's vernacular, using the dialect to enforce social norms. Parkinson records a vivid scene where Featonby interrupts his own sermon to address a woman named 'Nannie' who refused to forgive a neighbour. Switching into broad dialect, he challenged her directly: "Noa, Nannie... Did thou and Mary ever get that quarrel made up?" When she refused, he publicly

[12] Parkinson, p. 99.

[13] Parkinson, pp. 114-115.

admonished her as an 'unforgiving Nannie'.[14] This illustrates how the Methodist preacher acted as a moral magistrate within the village, maintaining the social cohesion and solidarity that Durkheim identified as the function of religion. This was not only a characteristic of Methodism, but it is also clear in all religions, including Catholicism. For instance, in relation to my own family in early Victorian Crook, County Durham, the affect that the Catholic Church had on Crook's Irish immigrants is manifest and emphasises its powerful capacity to provide social, cultural, and economic welfare to miners and their families.[15]

The Blue Man.

The social hierarchy of the pit is another key theme in Parkinson's narrative. He contrasts the 'master' and the 'masterer'—the boss who ruled by fear and the one who ruled by kindness. He recalls a man with a "stick of authority" who threatened him, contrasting sharply with

[14] Parkinson, pp. 105-106.

[15] McManus, M. (2023) *From Townland to Township: The Complex Evolution of a Dissipative Famine-Irish Community in County Durham.* Independently Published.

the "Blue Man", likely named for his blue flannel clothes, who offered a kind word: "Now, hinney! is thoo the new trapper?". This small act of kindness reduced the boy to tears, highlighting the emotional fragility of the child worker and the protective role older miners often played.[16]

Tragedy and Transformation (1844–1850).

By the mid-1840s, George Parkinson had transitioned from a frightened 'trapper boy' into a young man fully aware of the precariousness of his existence. The narrative shifts from personal anecdotes to a broader commentary on the 'price of coal,' driven by specific disasters. Parkinson provides a searing eyewitness account of the aftermath of the Haswell Colliery explosion, which occurred shortly after the great strike of 1844. He describes walking to the 'Long Row' at Haswell to see the families of the seventy victims. The image he records is one of the most haunting in mining literature: in one house alone, he saw five coffins stood—two on the bed, two on the dresser, and one on the floor. For the

[16] Parkinson, p. 21.

historian, Parkinson's reflection on this tragedy is crucial because it highlights the total lack of social security in the early Victorian era. He notes that for the widows and orphans, no provision of any kind existed. It was this specific horror that eventually planted the seeds for the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund:

> Those who formed the society arranged the sub subscriptions at a small sum per fortnight – 'a pint o beer and a half-ounce of baccy', as I have heard it described. At first the membership was very small, and the first balance-sheet only dealt with the total sum of £62. Soon, however, the benefits became known, and a strong propagandist effort was under-taken by the agents, Messrs. Alexander Blythe and John Howey. Many members were enrolled, funds increased, and to-day practically every miner on the Durham and Northumberland coalfield is included in the membership of that society.[17]

[17] Parkinson, p. 43. The Miners' Permanent Relief Fund was established in 1862, largely as a response to the Hartley Colliery Disaster, though Parkinson notes the seeds were sown by earlier tragedies like Haswell (1844).

Parkinson details the grassroots economics of this fund: it was not funded by the state, but by the miners themselves, who subscribed 'a pint o' beer and a half-ounce of baccy' per fortnight. By the time of his writing, this fund had paid out three million pounds to widows and orphans—a triumph of working-class self-organisation. While the story of the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund shows the economic side of solidarity, it also shows the emotional side—how the community rallied around its elderly members to prevent isolation.

The Wesley Guild and the Golden Wedding.

The story of Willie Oliver illustrates Methodism's informal emotional networks. Parkinson describes how the chapel youth group decided to honour an elderly miner and his wife, Ann. This was not a wealthy family; Parkinson notes they were 'unnoticed' people whose lives would typically be recorded only in the 'final audit of human affairs.' Yet, the community decided to crown their fifty years of marriage with a public celebration. When Willie fell ill on the very week of the party, the

community did not cancel. Instead, they adapted the ritual to the reality of the miner's broken body. They held the celebration in the chapel with Ann alone, and then a delegation marched to Willie's sickbed to present him with a “purse of gold”:

> The purse being opened for him, the money fell out on the quilt. Willie, turning round, said " What's this aboot, sir? What dis 't mean?' Well,' was the reply, ' it's a golden wedding, you know, and that gold is yours. 'Then, looking down at the money, he burst into tears, saying," We canna tak' t, sir ; we canna tak' 't. We ve duin nowt to desarve all this kindness. It'll hae to gan for the good o the cause. ‘Well Yes, Willie’, was the reply. ‘You are the cause just now, and Ann will apply the money to the good of the cause as no one else can; so you must be content to leave it as it is.' Then after a few words of prayer they were left to talk over their golden wedding in which they rejoiced as the crowning joy of their lives.[18]

[18] Parkinson, pp. 124-125.

This scene—of a sick miner being honoured in his own bed by the village youth—is a powerful Durkheimian moment. The "purse of gold" was not charity in the cold sense; it was a recognition of worth. The community was validating the life of one of its own, ensuring that even in sickness, the miner remained part of the social body. As Parkinson notes, the money allowed Willie to finish his days in comfort, but it was the *act* of giving that mattered most.

Durkheim and the Sacred Bond.

While Weber helps explain the transformation of the individual miner, Émile Durkheim's theories on social solidarity explain the survival of the community. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim argued that the function of religion is to create social cohesion—to bind the community together against the chaos of the profane world. For the Durham miner, the pit represented the ultimate profane chaos—a place of darkness, sudden death, and economic uncertainty. In response, the Chapel provided the sacred structure necessary for collective survival. The creation of the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund was not just an economic act; it was a manifestation

of Durkheimian solidarity. The miners, abandoned by the state and the owners, used the organisational structures of their faith to create a self-sustaining welfare system. The 'pint of beer and half-ounce of baccy' subscription was a ritual offering that solidified the group's bond, proving that in the face of industrial slaughter, the community's cohesion was its only defence.

The Last Day: November 1850.

It was the explosion of November 1850 that ended Parkinson's mining career. The description of his last day down the pit is written with a cinematic clarity. He sets the scene with a poetic contrast. Walking to the pit on a cold, frosty morning, he admires the myriads of stars and the cloudless blue sky, only to leave them for the grimy surroundings of the mine. He was down the mine, working about seventy yards from the shaft, when the explosion occurred. He describes the sensation not as a noise, but as a terrific shock where the 'earth shook and trembled'.[19] The narrative of his escape is a masterclass in tension. Parkinson realises instantly that the initial blast is

[19] Parkinson, p. 49.

not the only killer; the deadly chokedamp, the suffocating gas left after an explosion, is rolling toward him like a dense cloud of dust. Miraculously, he escapes to the surface:

> A large and rapidly increasing crowd of people had already gathered round pit: some, in frantic excitement, dreading the worst, whilst many were anxiously inquiring if I thought there was any hope for those below. Having little such hope, and being unable to render further help, I started for home and hastened along the road as quickly as possible. The news, however, reached the village just before me, and great excitement prevailed. My father and brother, hearing the noise, sprang out of bed; my mother ran to the door and, seeing me running, stood speechless till I lifted my hand and called out with a faltering voice, 'Mother! I am no worse.' In a moment more I stood by her side. …...We entered the house together. Words for some moments were few. Suffice it to say there was a deep sense of thankfulness and a subdued feeling

> of joy in that house, mingled with sadness and sorrow for the fate of others.[20]

After resting for a short time Parkinson returned to the pit to see if he could help in the rescue, but there was little he could do. He describes the scene:

> Some received their own in a silence they could not break, and others in an excitement of feeling they could not control. …..One poor mother, grasping her son, exclaimed, 'The dead's alive, the lost is found.' Another woman, whose little boy-only ten years of age-was in the pit for the first time, after standing on a block of timber for some hours where she could see the cage as it came to the surface, watching with an eagle eye each group of the rescued as they came up, at length saw the long looked-for face of her boy amongst others in the cage. Springing from where she stood, and forcing her way through the crowd with almost superhuman strength, she seized her lad from the

[20] Parkinson, p. 52.

> banksman's hand and folded him closely to her breast without a word. The crowd gave way before her and strong men wept as they saw her, with firm-set lips, pale, wan face, and hurried step, turn aside into the lane beyond the crowd, where she dropped down on the grass and sat rocking her child with the deeply agitated feelings which a mother's heart alone can know.[21]

The true emotional weight of this narrative lies in the scene at the surface. Parkinson creates two indelible images of motherhood in crisis: the mother of 'joy,' grasping her living son, and the mothers of 'sorrow,' who had lost their sons. It was this tragedy—twenty-six lives lost—that finally pushed Parkinson out of the industry.

The Scholar-Miner and the Poet. The Dictionary and the Granite Rock.

Having left the physical darkness of the pit, Parkinson dedicates significant space to describing how he and his generation escaped the mental darkness of their

[21] Parkinson, pp. 56-57.

upbringing. Parkinson's book is a remarkable testament to the self-education tradition. His journey into literacy was literal as well as metaphorical. He recounts walking the twelve miles from New Lambton to Newcastle before 8 am. on a Saturday, merely to scour the bookstalls.

The most poignant anecdote concerns his purchase of *Walker's Dictionary*. Desiring a court of final appeal, to settle arguments about words, he walked to Gateshead to buy a copy. On his return, he stopped at Wrekenton to sit on a piece of blue shap granite and eagerly opened his prize, only to weep with disappointment when he realised it was 'nowt but a big spellin'-beuk'[22] full of words rather than stories. Yet, he persevered, and that book stood on his shelf for seventy-six years.

The Origin of 'The Pitman to His Wife'.

The culmination of Parkinson's cultural influence is detailed in the book. This is historically significant as it identifies the real-world inspiration for Dora Greenwell's

[22] Parkinson, p. 63. *Walker's Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* (first published 1791) was a standard text for self-improving working-class readers in the 19th century.

famous poem, *The Pitman to His Wife*.[23] The setting was a bazaar in Sherburn in 1865. Parkinson describes being approached by a lady—unbeknownst to him, the poet Dora Greenwell—who questioned him on the nature of Methodist 'revivals'.[24] Parkinson's defence of his faith—arguing that revivals were judged by their 'fruits,' turning gamblers into sober men—impressed the poet deeply. Parkinson pointed out a specific man in the room, Mark Pratt, a former gambler turned chapel-keeper, as living proof. Greenwell wrote the poem on this subject of salvation and conversion and sent a copy of the poem to Parkinson who took it to Pratt and his wife and read it to them:

> On receiving the poem, I took a copy down to my friend and his wife and read it to them as he sat

[23] Dora Greenwell (1821–1882) was a poet and essayist born at Greenwell Ford, County Durham. Her poem *'The Pitman to His Wife'* first appeared in her collection *Songs of Salvation* (1873). See poem online at: https://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=chadwyck_ep/uvaGenText/tei/chep_3.1611.xml;chunk.id=d7;toc.depth=100;toc.id=d3;brand=default

[24] Methodist Revival was an 18th-century, evangelical movement originating within the Church of England, led by John and Charles Wesley, and which focused on personal salvation, holiness, and field preaching to ordinary people.

> smoking his pipe after coming home from the pit On hearing it read, turning to his wife, he said 'That's very like thou an' me, Hannah.' 'Yes', was the reply, 'that's your photo in poetry!' 'Then that' he said, 'is the photo of Mark Pratt and Hannah of Sherburn Colliery, by Dora Greenwell'.[25]

Through Parkinson's memoir, we see that the 'pitman poet' archetype was not a fiction, but a reflection of real men like Mark Pratt.

Conclusion: A Light in the Darkness.

George Parkinson died shortly after the publication of his memoirs, but his book remains one of the most lucid windows into the Victorian coalfield. He belongs to a specific generation of 'Methodist Miners' who bridged the gap between the brutal, unregulated mining of the 1830s and the organised, political mining communities of the 20th century. His life story tracks the arc of the century: from the terrified boy hanging on a chain loop in the 1830s, to the young man surviving the 'chokedamp' of

[25] Parkinson, p. 89.

1850, to the respected elder meeting poets and debating theology in the 1900s.

Ultimately, George Parkinson's life invites a triangulation of two sociological giants – Weber and Durkheim. Parkinson embodies the Weberian ideal of the self-made, disciplined man who walks twelve miles to buy a dictionary, yet he remains deeply embedded in the Durkheimian solidarity of the village, where neighbours feed each other during injury and mourn together at the pit head. It was this unique combination—the discipline to improve oneself and the loyalty to support one's neighbour—that defined the 'Methodist Ascent' of the Victorian working class.

Perhaps the most fitting epitaph for his generation comes from the final pages of his book. He recounts visiting his old friend Mark Pratt, the subject of the Greenwell poem, on his deathbed. When asked how he was coping, the old miner replied with the refrain from the poem that his own life had inspired: "Leaning hard, sir! Leaning hard."[26]

[26] Parkinson, p. 90.

For the modern historian, Parkinson's book allows us to lean hard on the past—to see beyond the statistics of coal output and glimpse the terrifying, exhausting, and ultimately dignified lives of the men who hewed it.

The Merchant of Pain: St Godric, Somatic Capital, and the Political Economy of Grace at Finchale.

Introduction: The Economy of the Saint.

The history of medieval sanctity is frequently obscured by the fog of hagiography.[1] We are accustomed to reading the lives of saints as linear narratives of spiritual ascent, where the protagonist sheds their worldly identity to embrace a purely mystical existence. This paper seeks to challenge the traditional hagiographical reading of St Godric of Finchale (c. 1065-1170) by applying a rigorous sociological and economic focus to his life and cult. The prevailing narrative suggests a radical dichotomy between Godric the pirate and Godric the hermit. Yet, a closer inspection reveals a continuity of logic that transcends this divide.

This paper argues that Godric did not renounce his mercantile past but rather transposed his 'Merchant

[1] Hagiography is the study or writing of the lives of saints.

Habitus' onto the spiritual plane.[2] He did not stop trading; he simply stopped trading material goods for gold and began trading physical suffering for grace. By analysing his extreme asceticism not as religious fervour but as a mechanism for accumulating 'Somatic Capital,' and identifying the Cathedral's exclusion of women as a critical 'Market Failure,' this paper demonstrates how Finchale Priory functioned as a necessary 'Shadow Sanctuary' within the Palatinate's economy of grace.[3]

Furthermore, the relationship between the hermit and the institutional church was not merely one of piety, but of competition and eventual acquisition. I will trace the 'Institutional Capture' of this spiritual enterprise, detailing how the Benedictine bureaucracy ultimately acquired Godric's charismatic assets through a process analogous to a corporate buyout.[4] This was not merely a spiritual

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[2] McManus, M. (2026) *The Entrepreneur of Grace: St Godric, Somatic Capital, and the Privatisation of the Sacred at Finchale Priory.* Independently Published.

[3] McManus, M. ibid.

[4] McManus, M. ibid

succession; it was a hostile takeover of a high-performing asset by a monopoly provider.

Theoretical Framework: Beyond the Miracle.

To reconstruct the lived reality of Finchale, we must move beyond the theological narrative and employ a rigorous sociological methodology. The traditional tools of the historian—relying solely on the face value of monastic chronicles—fail to capture the power dynamics at play. Therefore, this study utilises a 'Theoretical Triangulation' of three distinct frameworks to interrogate the evidence.

Bourdieusian Economics: The Logic of Practice

First, I apply Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of Habitus and Capital. Bourdieu argues that the 'science of the social world must inevitably overcome... the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism'.[5] In the context of medieval sanctity, this means we must stop viewing the saint purely through the subjective lens of his own visions, or the objective lens of church doctrine. Instead, we view

[5] Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press.

Godric not as a mystic, but as an agent operating within a 'field' of power, utilising specific forms of capital to improve his standing.[6] The central concept here is *Habitus*—the ingrained dispositions, reflexes, and forms of 'know-how' acquired through a lifetime of experience. Godric spent the majority of his life as a merchant. Bourdieu's framework allows us to see that when Godric entered the freezing river at Finchale to suffer pain, he did not leave his merchant self on the bank. He brought his *Habitus*—his capacity for risk calculation, investment, and exchange—into the hermitage. Furthermore, we expand Bourdieu's types of capital (cultural, economic, social) to include 'Somatic Capital'—the value generated by the disciplining and breaking of the body.[7]

Foucauldian Spatial Theory: The Heterotopia

Second, I utilise Michel Foucault's concept of the *Heterotopia*—a space where the traditional rules of society are suspended, inverted, or contested.[8] Medieval Durham

[6] Bourdieu, P. ibid.

[7] McManus, M. ibid.

[8] Foucault, M. (1984) *Des espaces autres.* Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité.

was a landscape of rigid control. Finchale, however, is identified in this study as a 'Heterotopia of Compensation,' a chaotic, organic space necessary to balance the rigid, purified space of the Cathedral.[9] Likewise, in a previous study, I argued that Durham Cathedral functioned as a 'Crisis Heterotopia,' a space where time was suspended and the laws of the King evaporated at the touch of the Sanctuary Knocker.[10] Foucault suggests that societies require these counter-sites to function. Just as a garden acts as a heterotopia to the city, the wild hermitage acts as a heterotopia to the ordered cathedral. It is a space of deregulation. By viewing Finchale through this lens, we can understand why the Church allowed such a chaotic figure to exist on its doorstep: Godric provided a necessary spatial outlet for the spiritual impulses that the central institution could not contain.

[9] McManus, M. ibid.

[10] McManus, M. (2025) *The Bureaucratisation of Grace: A Foucauldian Analysis of Sanctuary at Durham Cathedral.* Independently Published.

Weberian Authority: Charisma vs. Bureaucracy

Finally, I employ Max Weber's distinction between Legal-Rational Authority (the Bishop/Office) and Charismatic Authority (the Hermit/Individual) to understand the friction between the written law and the living saint.[11] The Bishop of Durham possessed *Legal-Rational authority*; his power was derived from his office, his vestments, and the apostolic succession. Godric possessed *Charismatic authority;* his power was derived from his personal magnetism and his visible suffering. Weber notes that Charismatic authority is inherently unstable and revolutionary, while Legal-Rational authority is stable and bureaucratic. The history of Finchale is the history of the inevitable clash between these two forces, and the eventual 'routinisation' of Godric's charisma into the bureaucracy of the Priory.

The Two Cities of Grace: A Geopolitical Analysis.

To understand the sociology of grace in twelfth-century England, we must first confront the geography of the

[11] Weber, M. (1922) *Economy and Society*. University of California Press.

Durham peninsula. It is a landscape defined by severance. The River Wear, looping violently around the rocky promontory, acts as a natural moat that isolates Durham Cathedral, the sacred centre, from the secular hinterland.[12] This geography is not merely defensive in a military sense; it is theological. Rising from this rock, the cathedral structure is less a church and more a fortress of God.

Scholarship on medieval Durham has long been divided into two distinct traditions: the Legal-Historical, which views the Cathedral as a juridical fortress[13] and the Hagiographical, which views the Saint as an isolated vessel of miracles.[14] This division overlooks the functional economic relationship between the institution and the individual. To understand how power actually operated in

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[12] McManus, M. ibid.

[13] Lapsley, G.T. (1900) *The County Palatine of Durham: A Study in Constitutional History*. New York: Longmans, Green & Co.
Scammell, J. (1966) "The Origins and Limitations of the Liberty of Durham". *The English Historical Review*, 81(320), pp. 449-473.

[14] Coombe, M. (2022) *The Life and Miracles of Saint Godric, Hermit of Finchale*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Tudor, V.M. (1987) "Reginald of Durham and Saint Godric of Finchale: Learning and Religion on a Personal Level". *Studies in Church History*, 17, pp. 195-208.

the Palatinate, we must apply a third lens: the Sociology of Power. This paper posits that the relationship between the Bishop (the Institution) and the Hermit (the Individual) was not merely a spiritual friendship, but a contest over the 'Monopoly of Grace'. The Cathedral held the monopoly on the sacraments, but Godric threatened to break their monopoly on access to the divine.

Just as a city requires a waste ground to absorb its excess, the Bureaucracy of Grace at Durham City required a 'Shadow Sanctuary' to absorb the demographic and spiritual excesses—specifically women and the charismatic poor—that the rigid Benedictine regime could not contain. Three miles downstream, amidst the tangled woods of Finchale, St Godric established this counter-site. Following Foucault, we can identify Finchale Priory not merely as a hermitage, but as a 'Heterotopia of Compensation'.[15] Where the Cathedral was defined by the 'North Door' and surveillance, Finchale was defined by the open woods; it was the deregulation of the sacred.

[15] McManus, M. (2026) *The Entrepreneur of Grace: St Godric, Somatic Capital, and the Privatisation of the Sacred at Finchale Priory.* Independently Published.

The Merchant Habitus: The Logic of Conversion.

St Godric's biography is often framed as a radical break: the pirate who turned his back on the sea to embrace poverty. The hagiographers present a 'Road to Damascus' moment where the sinner instantly becomes the saint. However, a Bourdieusian analysis suggests this break is an illusion. Godric did not renounce his identity as a merchant; he merely relocated his business to a new sector. Through the retitling of Godric as The Entrepreneur of Grace I argue that he didn't abandon his merchant mindset; he simply changed markets.

Pierre Bourdieu defines *Habitus* as a set of ingrained dispositions toward risk, calculation, and exchange. This is the deep structural programming of an individual's behaviour. For decades, Godric had navigated the treacherous waters of the North Sea as a ship-owner and trader, calculating the margins between a successful voyage and a watery grave. This required a specific psychological constitution: an ability to endure hardship for future reward, a keen sense of value, and a willingness to leverage assets. When he retreated to the woods of Finchale, he did not abandon this sea-sense; he

transposed it. He applied the logic of the marketplace to the economy of salvation. In the medieval mindset, grace was a commodity that could be earned, stored, and spent. It was a transactional theology. As a merchant, Godric understood investment, risk, and profit. Instead of trading wares for gold, he traded suffering for grace. Just as he once hoarded wealth, he began hoarding spiritual merit.

Godric was, in essence, a venture capitalist of the spirit. Unlike the Benedictine monks of Durham, who operated within a closed system of inherited wealth—relying on the endowments of the Church and the prestige of St Cuthbert—Godric recognised that Grace was a commodity that could be accumulated through personal effort. His extreme asceticism was not madness; it was a rational market strategy. In the merchant's mind, great profit requires great outlay. To purchase the 'pearl of great price,' he knew he had to liquidate all his other assets: comfort, safety, and health. He was leveraging his position, going all in on the promise of a heavenly return.

Somatic Capital: The Accumulation of Pain.

To understand the rise of Finchale, we must look closely at the specific physical investments Godric made. While modern readers might view his lifestyle as madness, the historical record suggests a highly disciplined, almost industrial application of physical hardship. Lacking the Institutional Capital of the Bishop—he possessed no vestments, no liturgy, and no stone cathedral—Godric needed a new currency to compete in the spiritual marketplace. He found it in his own body. This paper introduces the term Somatic Capital to describe the use of the physical body as a primary asset to purchase spiritual authority. Godric's asceticism was not random; it was a systematic process of capital accumulation. The primary source for these details, the chronicler, Reginald of Durham,[16] provides a forensic accounting of this investment strategy.

The Hydraulic Mechanism of Grace

The most vivid evidence of this accumulation is found in Godric's use of the River Wear. The river was not merely

[16] Coombe, M. ibid.

a water source; it was an instrument of penance. The historical record details that, 'He had a bath excavated in the earth in which he was accustomed to stand naked all the night with the water reaching to his neck' and he would also stand naked in the freezing waters of the Wear all night, reciting psalms while the current battered his aging frame.[17] For a local historian, the geography here is crucial. The Wear at Finchale is treacherous, cold, and prone to flooding. By immersing himself in this wild water, Godric was physically distinguishing himself from the monks in Durham, who washed in the warm water of the lavatories within the cloister. The river became a machine for Godric effectively generating awe to those who visited for his blessings. Every night spent in the freezing current was a deposit of suffering that yielded a dividend of reputation.

The Iron Vestments

Furthermore, Godric replaced the silk vestments of the Bishop with iron. The chronicles by Reginald record that

[17] Boyle, J. R. (1892*) Comprehensive Guide to the County of Durham.* London: Walter Scott. p. 402.

he wore a breastplate of chainmail beneath his sackcloth. This was not worn for battle, but for abrasion. Over time, the metal links embedded in his flesh, effectively becoming a second skin. The pain was constant, a relentless reminder of his spiritual vocation. Reginald explicitly writes that the metal links had become so embedded that they were hidden by his flesh, effectively merging the man and the metal.[18] Godric also rejected the basic comforts of furniture. The sources note that a "stone served for his pillow and his table".[19] This detail is significant for the local history of material culture; while the Bishop of Durham dined at high tables and slept on feather beds, the Hermit of Finchale slept on the geology of the county itself.

Following the logic that 'the body believes in what it plays at,'[20] Godric did not just *think* about being a penitent; his body 'believed' it by physically merging with the instrument of his suffering. The 'second skin' is the

[18] Coombe, M. ibid. pp. 120–123.

[19] Boyle, J.R. ibid. p. 402.

[20] Bourdieu p. 73.

perfect example of Bourdieu's claim: the outer performance of penance (wearing the mail) literally became the inner reality of his flesh. While historians like Tudor and Coombe[21] focus on the textual evidence of this miracle, verifying *what* Reginald wrote, applying Bourdieu allows us to explain the *mechanism* of medieval sanctity: it was not an abstract theological decision, but a physical process where the 'body believes what it plays at'. This self-inflicted agony was a performance of value. Godric was depreciating his physical asset (his body) to generate an appreciation in his spiritual asset (his reputation). The more he suffered individually, the more 'valuable' he became as a holy man to the local population.

This accumulation of Somatic Capital allowed Godric to bypass the Cathedral's hierarchy. He did not need the monks to access God because he had established a direct, private line through his own pain. In a 12th-century society that fetishised the suffering of Christ, this self-inflicted agony became a form of currency. It generated

[21] Coombe, M. and Tudor, V.M. ibid.

what we might call 'Charismatic Authority'. Every scar was a deposit in a spiritual bank account that the Cathedral could not freeze. Thus, the Merchant Saint used his body as a tool of heavy industry, manufacturing the holy awe that would eventually make his humble hermitage a rival to the great stone fortress upriver.

Market Failure: The Geography of Exclusion.

Godric's enterprise succeeded not just because of his personal investment, but because the monopoly provider—Durham Cathedral—was suffering from a profound 'Market Failure'. To understand this, we must look at the specific legal and architectural restrictions placed on the Cathedral precinct during this period.

The Biopolitics of St Cuthbert

The Cathedral exercised a specific form of 'biopolitics': the filtration of bodies based on gender. The cult of St Cuthbert was historically defined by a 'protective anxiety' regarding women; the misogyny of the saint transformed the precinct into a moral cordon of sanitary. This was not merely a custom; it was enforced by hard borders. The most famous physical evidence of this exclusion is

the 'Blue Marble Cross' set into the nave floor of the Cathedral. This line functioned as a strict boundary; any woman crossing it faced immediate physical expulsion.[22] While men could approach the high altar and the shrine of St Cuthbert, women were physically segregated, held back at the far west end of the church.

The Sanctuary that Wasn't

This exclusion extended to the legal privilege of Sanctuary. As established in the *Sanctuarium Dunelmense,*[23] the population of sanctuary seekers recorded in the Cathedral registers was exclusively male. This created a massive market failure in the economy of salvation: half the population was barred from the primary source of grace. Using the anthropological framework of Douglas, we can see that in the male-coded system of Durham, the

[22] Boyle, J. R. ibid. p.256.

[23] Raine, J., ed. (1837) *Sanctuarium Dunelmense et Sanctuarium Beverlacense.* Surtees Society Vol. 5. London: J. B. Nichols and Son. On line at: https://archive.org/details/SanctuariumDunelmenseEtSanctuariumBeverlacense

female body was viewed as 'matter out of place'.[24] A woman entering the precinct was not just breaking a rule; she was introducing an ontological contamination that threatened the defensive power of the shrine. Douglas allows us to move beyond a purely descriptive account of the exclusion of women at Durham when she argues that pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications. She famously defines dirt not as something inherent, but as 'matter out of place.'

Applying this to the *Sanctuarium Dunelmense*, we can understand the prohibition of women not merely as theological misogyny, but as a structural necessity of the Crisis Heterotopia existing at Durham Cathedral.
The sociological consequence of this exclusion was the creation of a profound Spiritual Vacuum. For the female population of Durham—the wives of merchants, the daughters of farmers, the widows—the Cathedral was not a warm sanctuary; it was a forbidden zone. If a woman

[24] Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.* London: Routledge.

sought the intense, charismatic proximity to the divine that the medieval age demanded, the 'North Door' was effectively bricked up for her.

The 'Safe Male' and the Feminisation of the Wild.

It was into this vacuum that Finchale Priory emerged. Using Foucault's analysis, Finchale functioned as a Safe Counter-Site – a 'Heterotopia of Compensation'. The evidential data supports this demographic shift strongly. Statistics from Coombe's analysis of Godric's miracles reveal that a staggering 67.5% of his posthumous cures were performed for women.[25] This percentage is a statistical anomaly that cannot be ignored. It proves that Finchale functioned as the actual sanctuary for the female demographic excluded by the Cathedral. While the Cathedral served the political and legal needs of men, Finchale served the medical and spiritual needs of women.

[25] Coombe, M. ibid.

The Eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven

Why did women feel safe in the woods with a former pirate? The answer lies in Godric's specific brand of asceticism. Godric functioned as a 'Safe Male'. By destroying his virility through extreme asceticism—standing in freezing water until his skin decayed—he effectively desexualised himself. In a society where the secular clergy were often viewed as predatory or corrupt, Godric's visible mortification acted as a guarantee of safety. He was a 'Eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven,' allowing women to approach him, touch him, and confess to him in the woods of Finchale without the fear that accompanied interactions with the virile, well-fed secular clergy.

Vernacular Theology: The Mother Tongue

Godric operated a 'Vernacular Theology'. The Cathedral utilised Latin, the language of the Law and the Bishop. Godric utilised English, the language of the Home. Deeming notes that Godric's hymns, which he claimed were taught to him by the Virgin Mary, are the earliest

surviving English lyrics.[26] This linguistic choice is critical evidence. By composing in English, Godric acted as a 'Marian Proxy,' offering a maternal, listening ear in a landscape dominated by the patriarchal 'Man of Law' (Cuthbert) at Durham. By claiming direct instruction from the ultimate female authority—the Virgin Mary—Godric bypassed the misogynistic gatekeepers of Durham and opened a new market for grace.

Textual Capture: The Surveillance of the Biographer.

The Cathedral could not tolerate this independent accumulation of spiritual capital forever. A Wild Saint operating outside the bounds of the Benedictine Rule represented a risk to the centralised authority of the Bishop. Therefore, the history of Finchale immediately preceding and following Godric's death is the history of a 'Hostile Takeover' or 'Institutional Capture'.

The first mechanism of this capture was not financial, but textual. It began while Godric was still alive, with the

[26] Deeming, H. (2005) 'The Songs of St Godric: A Neglected Context'. *Music & Letters*.

deployment of Reginald of Durham. Reginald was sent by the bishop to record Godric's biography, but to view him merely as a scribe is to misunderstand his function. In the context of the twelfth-century ecclesiastical administration, Reginald was an agent of the central bureaucracy—a 'Mobile Watcher' sent to categorise the wild saint.

The Audit of Visions

Historical analysis of Reginald's text reveals a persistent friction. Tudor argues that Reginald incessantly attempted to categorise Godric's chaotic, organic visions within standard theological templates.[27] Reginald acted as an agent of Legal-Rational Authority trying to bind Charismatic Authority in ink. Godric's spirituality was oral, vernacular, and often confusing; Reginald's task was to translate this into the polished Latin of the Church. This process transforms the individual into a 'case'. Following Foucault's concept of the 'examination', the writing down of Godric transformed him from a living disruption into a static 'case file', effectively 'taming the

[27] Tudor, V.M. ibid.

shrew'. Coombe notes distinct stylistic shifts in the text that reveal the struggle between the hermit's raw spirituality and the monk's editorial control.[28] By capturing his life in a sanctioned book, the Cathedral ensured that Godric's legacy would preach the Cathedral's message, not his own.

Architectural Capture: The Panopticon in the Stone.

The physical ruins of Finchale Priory, which stand today, tell a story of surveillance that replaced the solitude of the hermitage.

The Hagioscope (Squint)

The most telling piece of architectural evidence is the 'squint' window. Boyle's 19th-century survey of the ruins notes the construction of this specific feature, designed to "enable a person in the Dormitory to see the altar and shrine".[29] While functionally this allowed sick or elderly monks to witness the mass, in the context of the struggle

[28] Coombe, M. ibid.

[29] Boyle, J. R. ibid.

for control, it takes on a Foucauldian significance - it functioned as a permanent *Panopticon*. Even in death, the saint remained under the unblinking gaze of the Benedictine administration. The wild woods where Godric once hid from the world were replaced by a stone structure designed for constant observation. The hermit who sought to escape the eye of man was eventually encased in a building designed to ensure he was never out of sight.

The Posthumous Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The ultimate capture, however, was economic. This paper conceptualises the events following Godric's death as a 'Posthumous Initial Public Offering (IPO)'. In modern finance, an IPO occurs when a private company lists itself on the stock market to raise capital from the general public. Godric had spent his life operating as a "private company," accumulating vast reserves of grace through his own labour.

Monetisation of the Tomb

Immediately after his death, the Cathedral moved to monetise this legacy. The monetisation of the tomb is

evidenced by specific financial records.[30] The tomb functioned as a spiritual bank vault: the light kept burning over the body was the visible dividend of the capital Godric had accumulated through decades of self-torture. The *Charters of Endowment,* and Boyle's transcriptions, provide concrete data on this. We see aristocrats, such as Edmund Crouchback, paying rent-charges specifically 'for the maintenance of the light about the body of St. Godric.'[31] These payments were essentially the purchase of shares in Godric's accumulated merit. The Cathedral acted as the broker, managing the stock (the saint's body) and collecting the transaction fees (the endowments) from the faithful who wished to benefit from the saint's surplus grace.

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[30] Raine, J. (1837) 'The Charters of Endowment... of the Priory of Finchale'. Surtees Society.
Boyle, J. R. ibid. pp. 403-410.

[31] Boyle, J. R. ibid. p. 406.

The Gentrification of the Wild: The Holiday Provision.

Perhaps the most ironic evidence of this institutional capture is found in the eventual use of the site. Godric founded Finchale as a place of extreme suffering. However, the Benedictine administration repurposed it as a place of extreme leisure.

The Ludi of Finchale

Raine's analysis of the charters reveals the existence of the 'Holiday Provision' or *ludi*.[32] The hermitage was repurposed as a holiday home for the monks of Durham Cathedral. The records show that monks would rotate out of the strict discipline of the Cathedral to spend weeks at Finchale, enjoying better food, relaxation, and freedom from the rigid cloistered life.

The site of Godric's torture, thus, became a site of leisure. The architectural inventory even lists a 'Player Chamber' built for minstrels.[33] This is a profound inversion of

[32] Raine, J. ibid.

[33] Boyle, J. R. ibid. pp. 408-409.

function: Godric went to Finchale to suffer more than the Cathedral allowed; the monks went there to suffer less. This represents the total gentrification of the counter-site. By turning the Shadow Sanctuary into an employee amenity, the Cathedral neutralised its threat. The dangerous, charismatic power of the wild saint was domesticated. The shrews had not only been tamed; they had been put on the payroll.

Conclusion: The Ecosystem of Shadows.

The story of St Godric and the monks of Durham is a lesson in the historical sociology of power. It demonstrates that the 'Bureaucratisation of Grace' at Durham Cathedral was never total; it relied on a symbiotic relationship with Finchale and Godric. The Cathedral, The City of Law required Finchale, The City of the Wild, to handle the messy cases that its rigid structures could not process. Godric was the 'Entrepreneur of Grace' who identified this market gap. He used his Merchant Habitus to invest in Somatic Capital, building a spiritual fortune that the Cathedral was eventually forced to acquire.

However, this ecosystem was fragile. When the Reformation finally dissolved the monasteries, it destroyed this delicate balance. By erasing the Shadow Sanctuary, the State destroyed the 'Safety Valve' of the north, leaving the individual fully exposed to the disciplinary power of the new order.

In the end, the image of the Benedictine monk resting in the ruins of Godric's cell, enjoying his authorised holiday, stands as the ultimate symbol of the captured saint. The merchant of pain had been bought out, his assets liquidated, and his wild sanctuary converted into a corporate retreat for the very institution he sought to escape.

Watchmen of the Shrine: Medieval Private Policing at Durham Cathedral.

Introduction.

This paper re-examines the administration of St Cuthbert's shrine not through a theological lens, but as an early form of private security and civil administration. It argues that long before the establishment of professional police forces in the nineteenth century, the Benedictine monks of Durham operated a sophisticated security apparatus designed to protect their assets—specifically the corporal presence of St Cuthbert—and manage the dangerous classes of the Palatinate. By enforcing a strict perimeter at the North Door, utilising panoptic surveillance from watching lofts, and compiling forensic intelligence in the *Sanctuarium Dunelmense*,[1] the monks functioned as wardens of the body rather than merely shepherds of the soul.

[1] Raine, J., ed. (1837) *Sanctuarium Dunelmense et Sanctuarium Beverlacense.* Surtees Society Vol. 5. London: J. B. Nichols and Son. On line at: https://archive.org/details/SanctuariumDunelmenseEtSanctuariumBeverlacense

Drawing on Foucault's concepts of *Governmentality* and the *Heterotopia*, the paper demonstrates how the Cathedral operated as a 'counter-site' where the King's law was suspended in favour of a new bureaucratic discipline. This system relied on a micro-physics of power—including the use of the black gown uniform as a biological filter and the transformation of the confession into a tool for criminal intelligence. Ultimately, the paper suggests that when the State abolished sanctuary in the 1540s, it did not invent modern policing methods but simply inherited the techniques of control—intake registers, surveillance, and containment—pioneered by the monks of the North Door.

To understand this mechanism fully, we must move beyond traditional legal history and engage with the sociology of governance. As Foucault noted, government is 'the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end'.[2] In Durham, the 'convenient end' was the maintenance of order in a violent frontier zone,

[2] Foucault, M. (2007) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*. M. Senellart, Ed., G. Burchell, Trans. Palgrave Macmillan. See specifically the lecture from February 1, 1978.

achieved through a unique synthesis of spiritual authority and bureaucratic discipline. Foucault cites this definition to illustrate a major historical shift in how power was understood. Historically, power was defined by control over a territory - 'Sovereignty' where The King ruled over his land and its laws. In the new model, 'Governmentality', Foucault shows that 'governing' is not just about territory but is also about managing a complex relationship between men and things. 'Things' here refers to men in their relationships with wealth, resources, means of subsistence, customs, habits, and the environment. This definition matters because Foucault emphasises 'the right disposition of things' to argue that modern government is not just about imposing laws (sovereignty), but about employing tactics to manage populations and economies to achieve specific results (convenient ends).

Although Foucault intended 'Governmentality' to relate to power relationships commencing in the 18th century, I argue here that this type of power relationship is suitable to apply to the medieval process of sanctuary at Durham Cathedral. By analysing the specific cases of the

Sanctuarium Dunelmense[3] we can see that the monks of Durham were not just shepherds of the soul; they were participants in a mechanism which made them wardens of the body.[4]

Defining 'Policing'.

To argue that the monks of Durham Cathedral acted as a private police force, we need to first detach the word 'police' from its modern, narrow association with blue uniforms and crime detection. The concept of a professional constabulary is a nineteenth-century invention, dating effectively to Sir Robert Peel's reforms of 1829. However, the *function* of policing is ancient. Prior to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term 'police', derived from the Greek *politeia* and Latin *politia*, possessed a far wider and more fundamental meaning: it referred to 'civil administration' or the general condition

[3] Raine, J., ed. (1837) *Sanctuarium Dunelmense et Sanctuarium Beverlacense.* Surtees Society Vol. 5. London: J. B. Nichols and Son. On line at: https://archive.org/details/SanctuariumDunelmenseEtSanctuariumBeverlacense.

[4] McManus, M. (2025) *The Bureaucratisation of Grace: A Foucauldian Analysis of Sanctuary at Durham Cathedral.* Independently Published. p. 7.

of a state being well-ordered. In this pre-modern sense, policing was not merely about arresting offenders; it was the entire apparatus of governance used to maintain the health, safety, and morality of a community. As discussed earlier, it encompassed what Foucault described as 'the right disposition of things' necessary for the strength of the state—including the regulation of markets, the cleanliness of streets, and the surveillance of the population.

In medieval England, this 'policing' was not the monopoly of the State. It was often a communal obligation, enforced through systems like the 'frankpledge' and 'hue and cry,' where the responsibility for order lay with the local community rather than a central agency. Yet, within the autonomous jurisdiction of the Durham Palatinate, this responsibility was consolidated. The Benedictine monks did not merely pray; they administered the *politia* of the Cathedral precinct. They maintained the 'watch and ward' over the high-value asset of St Cuthbert's shrine, managed the dangerous classes who sought sanctuary, and recorded intelligence on the region's criminality.

By adopting this wider definition—police as the *administration of civil order*—we can see the monks not as strange religious figures, but as the operators of a sophisticated, private security enterprise. To the medieval fugitive The Sanctuary Knocker was an emergency access point—a panic button that activated a complex security protocol. When the knocker was struck it triggered a system that transformed the Cathedral from a space of worship into a zone of legal immunity. But this immunity came at a price. The fugitives were not simply 'saved'; they were processed.[5]

From Jurisdiction to Governmentality.

The historiography of medieval sanctuary has traditionally been dominated by legal positivism, where the institution is viewed primarily as a friction point between the developing Common Law and Canon Law. The seminal works in this field focus on the procedural mechanisms of sanctuary—the coroner, the abjuration of the realm, and the eventual restriction of privilege. Shoemaker[6]

[5] McManus, M. ibid.

[6] Shoemaker, K. (2011) *Sanctuary and Crime in the Middle Ages, 400–1500*. New York. Fordham University Press.

provides the definitive longitudinal study of this erosion. He argues that sanctuary began as a restorative mechanism designed to interrupt blood feuds—a necessary pause in a world of private vengeance. However, Shoemaker demonstrates that as the English Crown centralised its monopoly on violence, sanctuary transformed from a social necessity into a legal wrong. Shoemaker's narrative is one of inevitability: as the State grew stronger, it could no longer tolerate a competing jurisdiction that halted the King's justice.

Building on this, McSheffrey[7] challenges the romanticised notion of sanctuary as a 'sacred space'. In her analysis of Tudor sanctuary, she reveals a highly secularised, bureaucratic system. She argues that by the late 15th century, sanctuary had become a pragmatic legal loophole used by debtors and felons, heavily regulated by the State. Her work is crucial for demonstrating that the Church was not simply protecting fugitives but was actively administering a parallel legal system involving oaths, fees,

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[7] McSheffrey, S. (2017) *Seeking Sanctuary: Crime, Mercy, and Politics in English Courts, 1400–1550.* Oxford. Oxford University Press.

and registers. While both these historians provide the essential 'what' and 'when' of sanctuary's decline, they rarely engage with the deeper sociological 'why' regarding the nature of the power being exercised.

The Governance of Counter-Conduct.

In contrast to the historians, sociologists studying modern migration have moved beyond legal definitions to analyse sanctuary as a specific modality of power. As we have seen earlier, this theoretical turn relies heavily on the work of Foucault, specifically his distinction between *Sovereign Power*—the right to take life or let live—and *Pastoral Power*, the obligation to sustain and improve the life of each individual. The leading voice in this field is Lippert[8], who reframes sanctuary through the lens of Foucault's 'Governmentality'. Lippert argues that sanctuary is not merely a religious act of charity, but a 'rationality of governance'. He posits that when the Sovereign State excludes a refugee, the Church steps in with Pastoral Power to fill the void. For Lippert, sanctuary acts as a

[8] Lippert, R.K. (2005) *Sanctuary, Sovereignty, Sacrifice: Canadian Sanctuary Incidents, Power, and Law*. Vancouver. UBC Press.

form of 'counter-conduct'—a resistance that does not seek to overthrow the State, but to govern the individual differently, prioritising salvation and care over punishment and law. This parallels both the contemporary situation of modern refugees in the United States and Europe, and the medieval Durham context, where the Bishop's sanctuary challenged the King's sovereignty.

I seek to bridge the disciplinary gap by applying Lippert's theoretical insights regarding Sovereign and Pastoral power back onto the primary data of the *Sanctuarium Dunelmense*.[9] There we can see that the tensions Foucault identified in the modern state were already visible in the 'micro-physics of power' practiced by the monks and sheriffs of medieval Durham.

The Asset and the Perimeter.

In any security operation, the priority is securing the asset. For the medieval monks at Durham the 'High Value Asset' was the corporal presence of St Cuthbert. The

[9] Raine, J. ibid.

privilege of sanctuary at Durham was uniquely linked to the presence and spiritual power of the Saint's body. This asset required a hardened perimeter. While the King's law ruled the open country, the Cathedral precinct ran as a 'counter-site'—or what Foucault termed a *Heterotopia*; a space where time and law were suspended.[10] To function as a heterotopia, a space must be spatially separated and physically distinct from the normal social order. The physical boundary of this zone was the North Door of the cathedral. In the early medieval period, the protection offered was less bureaucratic and more miraculous, relying on the terrifying spiritual reputation of the Saint to deter pursuers.

The efficacy of this perimeter is best illustrated by the eleventh-century miracle-case of Aldan-Hamal, a 'notoriously wicked' criminal who escaped prison and fled to the cathedral for sanctuary. When Barwith, a soldier of the Earl, attempted to breach the locked doors of the sanctuary to seize him, the security protocol of the

[10] Foucault, M. (1984) 'Of Other Spaces', *Architecture / Mouvement/Continuité*, 5. p. 46.

time—described then as a miracle—was activated. Barwith was allegedly struck down by a mysterious arrow and died.[11]

Reliance on miraculous intervention is not, however, a sustainable security strategy. As the Middle Ages progressed, the Church transitioned from mystical, 'miraculous' defence to 'bureaucratic' procedure. By the fifteenth century, the perimeter was no longer guarded by angels, but by a strict admission policy involving a knock, a bell, and a register.[12] This shift marks the transition from the charismatic authority of the Saint to the rational-legal authority of the institution.[13]

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[11] Boyle, J. R. (1892) *Comprehensive Guide to the County of Durham.* London. Walter Scott. pp. 259-261.

[12] McManus, M. ibid. p. 37.

[13] Weber, M. (1922) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology.* Published posthumously as *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft.* Editors/Translators: Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Translators also include Ephraim Fischoff, Hans Gerth, et al. University of California Press or Bedminster Press.

The Watchers: Panoptic Surveillance and the Uniform.

Once the fugitive was admitted into the cathedral, the priority shifted from protection to containment. Long before the 19th-century prison reformers, the monks of Durham had perfected a system of visibility. Upon knocking and then entry, the Galilee bell was tolled, signalling to the entire community that the sanctuary protocol had been activated. The refugee was then subjected to a rigorous intake procedure. They were provided with a black gown marked with a yellow St Cuthbert's cross on the shoulder. This was not merely an act of charity; it was a mechanism of institutional control. The gown marked the fugitive as a distinct subject, ensuring that wherever they moved within the precinct during their 37-day stay, they were instantly identifiable.[14] In sociological terms, this uniform stripped the individual of their previous identity and reconstituted them as a subject of the Church. They were no longer a 'felon' or a

[14] McManus, M. ibid. p. 7.

'debtor' in the eyes of the world but a 'Gritman', a marked ward of the Saint.[15]

This visibility was enforced by the watchers: the monks stationed in the chambers above the North Door who acted as the medieval equivalent of surveillance operatives.[16] Their gaze placed the refugee under a specific regime of observation. The cathedral functioned as a Panopticon[17], where the refugee was safe from the Sheriff but never free from the gaze of the Church. The layout of the watching lofts provided a direct line of sight

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[15] This is an historical term for the status described in the text where the fugitive is 'stripped of his own clothes' and given the 'black gown'. By putting on the gown, the fugitive enters the King's 'Grith' (peace) or, in this specific case, the Church's 'Grith.' They were no longer a standard criminal, subject to immediate execution by the Sheriff but had a special, protected legal status as long as they remained within the boundary of the North Door.

[16] McAleer challenges the record of the monks' chambers in McAleer, J. P., 2001. 'The North Portal of Durham Cathedral and the Problem of Sanctuary in Medieval Britain'. *The Antiquaries Journal,* 81. pp. 121–158. However, Boyle, ibid pp. 208, provides the testament of John Carter, Cathedral Surveyor: '1780. In this year the chambers over the north porch, formerly occupied by the monks who opened the door below to seekers for sanctuary, and rang the sanctuary bell, were destroyed…..'. This discussion is a continuing academic debate.

[17] Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* Translated by Alan Sheridan. London. Allen Lane.

to the sanctuary screen, ensuring that the movements, interactions, and visitors of the accused were constantly monitored. The case of Edred (c. 915) demonstrates that this containment could evolve into long-term habitation. Edred lived under the Saint's protection for three years, farming land lent by the bishop, effectively becoming a ward of the Bishop.[18] This suggests that the Church possessed the capacity not just for emergency shelter, but for long-term rehabilitation and management of offenders, functioning as a prototype for the modern open prison.

The Register as Forensic Intelligence.

Between 1464 and 1524, the detailed register of the refugees, *Sanctuarium Dunelmense,* reveals its forensic nature. The confessions recorded were not vague spiritual confessions; they were depositions designed to produce the truth of the crime. The level of detail recorded suggests that the register served an intelligence function, allowing the Church to understand the criminal dynamics of the region.

[18] Boyle, J.R. Ibid. p 259.

In 1485, the forensic confession of Jacob Manfield, who had confessed to killing the Rector of Wycliffe, is recorded. His statement is taken down with startling precision, noting the date '26th day of January', the location 'Village of Ovington', the weapon used a 'Welch bill' or polearm, and witnesses present as 'Vicar Roger Morland and Nicholas Dixon'. By recording such details, including the names of witnesses, the Church was effectively performing the investigative work of the Coroner. This data collection goes beyond spiritual penance; it creates a legal record that competes with the King's own archives.

Foucault argues that power is not just about repression; it is about the production of truth[19]- a machine for producing truth. Foucault contends that the West developed a science of sexuality based on the confession. He traces how the religious confession was adapted into legal, medical, and psychiatric examinations to extract truth from the subject.[20] In the context of the *Sanctuarium*

[19] Foucault, M. ibid.

[20] Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*. London. Allen Lane.

Dunelmense, the act of confession underwent a radical transformation. In the early phase the seeker fled to the corporal presence of the Saint. The truth of their crime was secondary to the physical act of touching the knocker or the shrine. However, by the later phase, 1460–1500, the Church had instituted a rigorous requirement for the confession. This is evident in the case of Jacob Manfield. The entry does not read like a spiritual unburdening of sin; it reads like a police statement under caution - a deposition.

By demanding this level of forensic detail, the Church was effectively performing the work of the Sheriff. The confession ceased to be a private transaction between the Sinner and God and became a mechanism for gathering intelligence on criminal networks. In Foucauldian terms, the monks became agents of Disciplinary Power; 'police', extracting truth from the subject in a format that was perfectly compatible with the King's courts.

Legal Coaching.

The *Sanctuarium Dunelmense* registers also suggest that the North Door had become a place of legal counsel. In

1464, William Hogeson confessed to killing John Staynton but specifically claimed the act was committed 'in defence of his body' (*in defensionem corporis sui*), self-defence. The recurrence of this specific legal phrasing suggests that the monks were advising refugees on how to frame their confessions to ensure leniency in secular courts. This indicates that the monks were not passive recipients of confessions but active legal agents, coaching offenders on how to navigate the complexities of common law pleas.[21]

Organised Violence and Networks.

The sanctuary also processed group criminality. In 1477, Christopher Holme sought sanctuary for a homicide committed 'in company' with others, revealing that the cathedral served as a strategic pause for violent groups.[22] Similarly, in 1510, Morley and Watkyn sought sanctuary simultaneously for a shared killing.[23] This capacity to

[21] McManus, M. ibid. p. 23.

[22] McManus, M. ibid, p. 38.

[23] McManus, M. ibid.

process co-defendants indicates that the registry functioned as an administrative hub for regional crime.[24]

Furthermore, the bureaucracy revealed organised criminal networks. George Byrket appears in records regarding crimes separated by 15 years (1503 and 1519).[25] The Bowman family utilised the sanctuary as a multigenerational base; Nicholas Bowman sought refuge for homicide in 1507, and a year later, his son William Bowman entered for helping his father and for breaking out of Hexham Gaol.[26] The register exposes that the cathedral had become a 'revolving door' for a regional criminal class.[27]

Geographic Reach.

The case of Roland Carlyll (c. 1490s) illustrates the geographic reach of this security apparatus. Carlyll

[24] McManus, M. ibid.

[25] McManus, M. ibid.

[26] McManus, M. ibid. p. 39.

[27] McManus, M. ibid. p. 38.

committed a murder with a wood axe in Lancashire, stole a horse, and rode north to Durham to claim asylum.[28] This demonstrates that the cathedral's reputation as a secure facility attracted clients from across the North of England, effectively operating as a regional hub for fugitives.[29]

The Gender Police: Enforcing the Blue Marble Line.

If the North Door functioned as the intake processing centre for the criminal male, it served a very different function for the female population: it was a hard border where women were forbidden to cross. Security is not just about managing bad actors; it is about managing access rights. This policing of gender extended physically into the nave. The security architecture of the Cathedral included a visible demarcation line: a cross of blue marble set into the floor. This was the 'Women's Boundary

[28] McManus, M. ibid. p. 39.

[29] McManus, M. ibid. p. 38.

Cross',[30] a 'biopolitical' border or 'filter'[31] that bisected the church. The monks enforced this line with physical rigour. In medieval Durham, the monks were not merely guarding against felons; they were operating as 'gender police,' enforcing a strict biological segregation.

Foucault's concept of 'biopolitical filter' perfectly matches the Intake Procedure for refugees, described earlier, as well as the segregation of women from the shrine. As Foucault argued, power requires a mechanism to fragment the biological continuum of the population. In Durham, the blue marble line served as this biological filter, distinguishing those who were to be saved from those who were to be punished.[32]

The *Sanctuarium Dunelmense* lists hundreds of sanctuary seekers, yet a forensic analysis of the data reveals a single, striking characteristic: the population was exclusively

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[30] Boyle, J.R. ibid.

[31] Foucault, M. (1976) 'Society Must Be Defended'. Lecture 11, March 17.

[32] Foucault, M. ibid.

male. The absence of female names in the register is not an administrative oversight but a structural feature of the security apparatus. The North Door functioned as a binary switch. The Watchers in the lofts were filtering entrants based on a specific compatibility with the regime of St Cuthbert. In this context, the female body, according to Douglas, was viewed not as a vessel for grace, but as a vector of temptation or 'matter out of place'[33] that threatened the purity of the institution.

This analysis moves us beyond a purely descriptive account of the exclusion of women at Durham by employing the anthropological framework of Douglas. She argues that pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications. She famously defines dirt not as something inherent, but as 'matter out of place'.[34]

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[33] Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

[34] Douglas, M. ibid.

Applying this to the *Sanctuarium Dunelmense*, we can understand the prohibition of women not merely as theological misogyny, but as a structural necessity of the Crisis Heterotopia. The Cathedral was an attempt to impose a perfect, static order upon the chaos of the borderlands. In this male-coded system of sanctity, the female body represented 'matter out of place', a disruption of the symbolic boundaries that defined the power of St Cuthbert. Therefore, the Invisible Wall described was not built to punish women, but to preserve the taxonomic purity of the institution itself.

The Rites of Durham record that any woman attempting to cross this line to approach the shrine would be ‘taken and set fast’.[35] This then was a zone of ‘Conditional Grace’. While the male pilgrim could move freely, the female pilgrim was halted at the marble line, creating a spiritual vacuum where fifty per cent of the population was physically barred from the source of salvation. Like any police force, the monks utilised deterrence to maintain order. The history of the Cathedral is populated

[35] Boyle, J.R. ibid. pp. 256-259.

with horror stories regarding women who breached this perimeter—cautionary tales designed to reinforce the exclusion zone.

Case Files of Transgression.

Boyle outlines some cases of transgression:[36]

> The Case of Queen Philippa (1333): The policing of this boundary was so absolute that status provided no immunity. Even the Queen of England was forced to leave the Prior's lodging in her undergarments because her presence violated the 'protective anxiety' surrounding the Saint's chastity.
>
> Sungeova: Falls dead after crossing the churchyard.
>
> The Wife of Tosti: Repelled by a 'gust of wind' and racked with pain until death.
>
> The Case of Emeloth: The enforcement of this line had severe psychological consequences. Boyle records the case of this child, who accidentally crossed the Blue Marble line. The penalty for this

[36] Boyle, J.R. ibid.

transgression was arrested development; she was struck with a form of idiocy and 'did not grow in knowledge'.

These cases illustrate that St Cuthbert was constructed as an 'unsafe male'—a figure of authority who policed his territory aggressively. The monks, acting as his deputies, maintained a Fortress of Purity where the 'King's Writ' might evaporate, but the ban on women was absolute.

Displacement to the Shadow Sanctuary.

This rigid policing created a market failure in the economy of salvation. Because the Cathedral functioned as a pressure cooker of male, bureaucratic rigidity, the system required a release valve. This necessitated the creation of Finchale Priory as a 'Shadow Sanctuary' or 'Heterotopia of Compensation'. While the Cathedral was the precinct of the 'Man of Law' (Cuthbert), Finchale became the domain of the 'Safe Male' (Godric). Godric, who physically dismantled his own virility through freezing water and metal vests to become a 'Eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven', offered a policed space where women were safe to enter. The fact that Emeloth was

restored to sanity only after visiting Godric proves that the hermitage functioned as a repair shop for those damaged by the Cathedral's strict gender policing.[37]

Jurisdiction Wars: The Custody Battle.

The existence of this private security apparatus created inevitable friction with the public police—the King's Sheriff. This conflict mirrors the tension Lippert[38] identifies between Sovereign Power (the right to punish) and Pastoral Power (the obligation to care). The *Sanctuarium Dunelmense* provides insight into how this jurisdictional standoff was managed.

The secular authorities were permitted to enter the 'secure zone' only under strict protocols. In the case of Colson (1497), the register records that the Coroner of Chester Ward was allowed to enter to take the confession, but the monks retained physical custody. Colson was made to

[37] McManus, M. (2026) *The Entrepreneur of Grace: St Godric, Somatic Capital, and the Privatisation of the Sacred at Finchale Priory*. Independently Published.

[38] Lippert, R.K. ibid.

strip to his shirt and surrender his clothing to the sacristan, symbolising the transfer of his body from secular ownership to the care of the Saint.[39] This ritual stripping acted as a boundary marker, reinforcing the suspension of the King's law. The tension peaked at the moment of the refugee's release. At the end of the protected period, the monks managed a formal handover. Colson was 'passed from one party of constables to another' and made to carry a 'white cross made of wood'.[40] This white cross served as a visual marker, tagging the offender for safe passage through the public jurisdiction, to a port where he sailed away from the King's jurisdiction forever. The Sheriff was forced to act not as an executioner, but as an escort. This subversion of the Sheriff's role highlights the power of the Church to dictate the terms of policing within its sphere of influence.

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[39] McManus, M. (2025) *The Bureaucratisation of Grace: A Foucauldian Analysis of Sanctuary at Durham Cathedral.* Independently Published. p. 38.

[40] Boyle, J.R. ibid. p.262.

However, the system had a breaking point. In 1521, John Wilkynson sought sanctuary not for felony, but for debt. This represented an economic tipping point. While the Crown might tolerate the protection of life, the protection of property (debtors) placed the Church in direct conflict with the emerging capitalist logic of the Tudor State. By interfering with the flow of credit, the private security of the Church became an intolerable obstacle to the public economy. When the Church extended its protection to financial liabilities, it interfered with the emerging capitalist economy of Tudor England. This shifted the conflict from King vs. Bishop to Creditor vs. Church, making the institution intolerable to the rising mercantile class and the State.[41] As McSheffrey notes, the abuse of sanctuary by debtors provided the Crown with the political leverage needed to dismantle the institution.[42]

[41] Raine, J. ibid. p. 2.

[42] McSheffrey, S. ibid.

Conclusion: The Legacy of the Cathedral's Private Police.

This investigation into the *Sanctuarium Dunelmense* reveals that the medieval Priory was not merely a spiritual retreat, but a complex apparatus of civil governance. By reframing the Benedictine monks as a private security enterprise, we uncover a system that anticipated the core functions of modern policing: the protection of high-value assets, the surveillance of dangerous classes, and the bureaucratic production of forensic truth.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the Gender Police and the Shadow Sanctuary at Finchale demonstrates that this security apparatus was fundamentally biopolitical. The North Door and the Blue Marble Line functioned as biological filters, sorting the population not just by legal status (felon vs. innocent) but by purity (male vs. female). The Monks enforced a rigorous taxonomy of grace where the female body was treated as a security risk to the spiritual asset of St Cuthbert, necessitating a separate safe space at Finchale for those excluded by the Cathedral's rigid policing.

Ultimately, the fall of sanctuary in the 1540s was not a failure of this system, but a hostile takeover. When the Tudor State dismantled the privilege, it did not discard the monks' methods. The intake registers, the panoptic surveillance, and the management of the marginalised were simply transferred from the Bishop's mitre to the King's crown. The Monks of Durham were the pioneers of a disciplinary power that would eventually mature into the modern police state; they were the early wardens of the body, leaving behind a legacy of control that survives in the structure of today's modern state.

The Patriotism of the Pew. The Dean of Durham, The Priest, and The Dead: A Critical Analysis of the 1923 War Memorial Dispute.

Introduction.

In May 1923, the unveiling of war memorials at St. Aidan's Roman Catholic Church in Willington Quay[1] and St. Charles's Roman Catholic Church at Gosforth,[2] should have been moments of sombre unity. Instead, they became the flashpoint for a bitter battle over the ownership of memory. As reported in the South Shields Gazette[3] and later in Catholic periodicals; *The Weekly*

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[1] An inscription, "Greater love than this no man hath that a man lay down his life for his friends St. John 15:13. to the memory of the soldiers and sailors of St. Aidan's congregation, Willington Quay, who laid down their lives in the great war 1914-1918. may they rest in peace". 70 names are listed. Online at North East War Memorials Project: www.newmp.org.uk. Accessed 21.1.26.

[2] A reproduction of Raphael's *Madonna di San Sisto*. North East War Memorials Project at: https://www.newmp.org.uk/memorial/picture-1914-18-st-charles-r-c-g9-32/ Accessed 27.1.26.

[3] South Shields Gazette, May 1923, report on St. Charles's Church memorial.

Freeman's Journal, The Venerabile and *The Tablet*, the events transformed into a public tribunal where Father George Wheatley of Willington Quay put the Dean of Durham, Bishop Welldon, under scrutiny for bigotry after he maligned the Catholic population. Using case study and critical analysis, we can see this was not merely a spat between clergymen; it was a struggle over the definition of British citizenship in the post-war Northeast.

Methodology.

To build a holistic understanding of the controversy, the paper employs an instrumental case study approach that foregrounds meaning, context, and structure. This allows for a concentrated examination of specific details that illuminate wider social issues. By adopting a single-case study design,[4] the research reconstructs both the narrative and the impact of Bishop Welldon's 1923 remarks. The approach relies on triangulating contrasting viewpoints to produce a fuller historical picture. The *South Shields Gazette* provides a primary public record of the event, capturing

[4] Stake, R. E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*. Sage.
Yin, R. K. (2018) *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (6th ed.). Sage.

how the alleged slur was received by local readers. This is set against the private and theological responses found in *The Venerabile* and contemporary Catholic commentary, which reveal the depth of the offence felt within the seminary and clergy. The interpretive focus I adopt is critical discourse analysis,[5] which treats language not as a neutral medium but as a form of social practice. Its critical dimension lies in exposing the connections between language, power, and ideology.

Although media reports form the core evidence, two secondary sources deepen the analysis. Sheen's seminal history of the Northumberland Fusiliers, *Tyneside Irish*,[6] substantiates Father Wheatley's claim that Irish Catholic volunteers "rushed to answer the call" at the outbreak of the First World War. A second source, my own family's wartime narrative, offers a vivid example of the kind of civic loyalty Wheatley sought to defend.[7]

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[5] Fairclough, N. (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press.

[6] Sheen, J. *Tyneside Irish* (1998) Barnsley. Pen and Sword Books.

[7] McManus, M. (2026) *Win the Coal, Win the War: Some Fragments from My Family's Battles* Independently Published.

This combined method bridges micro-analysis of texts with macro-analysis of the social structures that shaped the post-war period. It highlights how language can reinforce or challenge existing power relations. The media coverage of Bishop Welldon's remarks, together with Father Wheatley's rebuttal, thus becomes an instrumental case through which to explore broader themes of sectarianism, the politics of memory, and the struggle for Catholic acceptance.

Gross Malignment.

The conflict began with a media interview given by Bishop Welldon in 1923 which immediately drew the ire of the Catholic community locally, nationally and internationally. In a period when the memory of the Great War was still raw, Bishop Welldon publicly questioned whether allegiance to Rome was compatible with loyalty to Britain. His specific remark, which was later dissected and condemned in the international Catholic journal *The Venerabile*, expressed a provocative wish:

> ...that the Church of Rome had adopted and would adopt a policy, which would convince

> Protestants that it is easy to be at once a good Roman Catholic and a good citizen of the British Empire.[8]

The implication was clear: in Bishop Welldon's view, the Catholic Church had not yet proven that its followers could be trusted patriots. This statement infuriated writers in *The Venerabile*. Founded in 1922 as the student journal of the Venerable English College in Rome, *The Venerabile* addressed Bishop Welldon's comments because they struck at the seminary's core identity. As an institution historically defined by alumni who were martyred for their faith, the journal refuted Welldon's questioning of Catholic citizenship by arguing that English Catholics—from the Reformation to the First World War—had repeatedly proven their loyalty to the nation.

In the fraught years following the First World War, the North East of England became a battleground not just for industrial rights, but for religious reputation and at the

[8] "The Venerabile", Vol. 2, No. 1, October 1924, p. 57.

centre was Bishop Welldon's declaration. His comments had grossly maligned the Catholic people by questioning their patriotism and love of country. His comments defined 'Englishness' and 'Good Citizenship' as inherently Protestant. By doing so, he positioned Catholics not just as a different religion, but as a distinct group that did not belong to the national 'Us' but to the alien 'Other'. He was attempting to maintain the pre-war social hierarchy - regardless of their British uniform, Catholics, mainly Irish, remained 'suspects' who had to constantly prove their belonging. Bishop Welldon was trying to erase the unifying experience of the trenches to restore sectarian boundaries.

Bishop Welldon's marginalisation of Catholics in 1920s Tyneside can be understood through Linda Colley's assertion that British identity was historically predicated on Protestantism, thereby casting the Catholic as the perpetual 'Other'. As Edward Said notes, such identity construction relies on projecting negative traits onto the out-group to secure the status of the in-group. In this context, the local Catholic population functioned as Zygmunt Bauman's 'Strangers'—physically present within

the civic body but, in Bishop Welldon's view, ideologically alien. [9]

The Rebuttal.

On Saturday, 5th May 1923 the Catholic periodical, *The Tablet,* stated:

> Nor is the old libel dead. The Irish troubles of the last decade have given it a further lease of life, and so lately as 1923 Bishop Welldon, Dean of Durham, could wish "that the Church of Rome had adopted and would adopt a policy, which would convince Protestants that it is easy to be at once a good Roman Catholic and a good citizen of the British Empire"[10]

[9] Colley, L. (1992) *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Said, E. W. (1978) *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
Bauman, Z. (1991) *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Specifically, the chapter "The Scandal of Ambivalence").

[10] Quoted in "The Venerabile", Vol. 2, No. 1, 1924, p. 57.

This report in *The Tablet* is almost certainly what Father Wheatley read on the Saturday and which prompted his angry rebuttal from the pulpit on the very next day, Sunday, 6th. May at Gosforth. On that day Father Wheatley had been invited to preach at St. Charles's Church in Gosforth for a solemn occasion: the unveiling of a war memorial to the 34 men of the parish who had been killed in the war. Standing before the congregation and the new memorial Wheatley used the 'gallant dead' as his evidence against Welldon.

Correcting the Dean in what was described as "dignified language," Wheatley reminded the congregation that a good Catholic must inherently be a good patriot. He challenged Bishop Welldon directly. The relevant part of Wheatley's sermon was recorded in *The Weekly Freeman's Journal*:

> Durham's Dean Corrected.
> Father G. Wheatley, D.D., of St. Aidan's Church, Willington Quay, preaching at St. Charles's Church, Gosforth, on the occasion of the unveiling of a memorial to 34 men of the parish

> who fell in the war, corrected in dignified language the Dean of Durham, Bishop Welldon, who had, in an interview, grossly maligned the Catholic people. Reminding the congregation that a good Catholic must be a good patriot, who must espouse the cause of justice and defend the weak and oppressed, Dr. Wheatley said that in the late war hundreds of thousands of Catholic men rushed to answer the call. Turning to Dean Welldon's statement, Dr. Wheatley asked, "What did he mean? Did he doubt their patriotism, their love of country? If such were his feelings, let him read the history of the Tyneside Irish. Let him make a tour round their churches and read the long rolls of honour. Then let him realise that by such unwarranted statements he outraged the feelings of thousands of citizens and insulted the memory of their gallant dead."[11]

Father Wheatley argued that the blood spilled by the men listed on the St. Charles memorial—names such as John

[11] "The Weekly Freeman's Journal" (Dublin), 16 June 1923, p. 2.

Beaton, the brothers Albert and Austin Herron, and the Army Chaplain Rev. M.F. Burdess -- was the ultimate refutation of Bishop Welldon's unwarranted statements. By questioning their loyalty, he had deeply offended the living and dishonoured the dead.

From a local perspective we can turn to The South Shields Gazette for support for Father Wheatley's refutation:

> Priest and Dean.
> Rev. Dr. Wheatley, of Willington Quay, on Sunday last, when preaching in connection with the unveiling and dedication of a war memorial in St. Charles Catholic Church, Gosforth, replied to a recent statement by Bishop Welldon, questioning the patriotism and good citizenship of members of the Catholic Church. Dr. Wheatley, who took an active part in the all-local patriotic movements during the war, and whose work as a resident in the Mid Tyne district has gained for him personal esteem, was well qualified to answer the wordy Dean of Durham. It may be surprising

> to Dean Welldon to know that in this district the good citizenship of Catholics is not doubted, and in the war, before conscription, they responded so generously to the call for men that, if ever their loyalty had been seriously questioned, it was so no longer.[12]

Father Wheatley's response, delivered from the pulpit in Gosforth, had dismantled the Dean's argument using the Discourse of Sacrifice. Wheatley did not appeal to theology; he appealed to evidence - the Roll of Honour. His most potent rhetorical weapon was the timeline of enlistment. He argued that Catholics responded, "so generously... before conscription." This distinction is critical. In the language of 1923, 'conscripts' were those forced to fight by the state; 'volunteers' were those who fought for love of country. By highlighting that his flock joined before 1916, Wheatley argued that they had paid a "blood tax" voluntarily. He reframed the Catholic soldier not as a reluctant participant, but as a 'hyper-patriot' who rushed to the colours faster than his Anglican neighbours.

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[12] The *South Shields Gazette* May 11, 1923.

The "Tyneside Irish" as Evidence. Flesh and Blood vs. Abstract Theology.

This section argues that when Dean Welldon questioned Catholic loyalty, he was speaking in abstract, theological terms. Father Wheatley's defence was grounded in the reality of his parishioners - flesh and blood evidence that validates Wheatley's claim.

Wheatley explicitly challenged the Dean to "read the history of the Tyneside Irish" and "make a tour round their churches." Here, Wheatley utilises the Politics of Memory. The Tyneside Irish battalions (the 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th Northumberland Fusiliers) were iconic formations that had suffered horrific casualties at the Somme. By invoking their name, Wheatley moved the argument from the abstract to the concrete. He effectively argued that the Dean's words were not just insulting to the living, but a desecration of the gallant dead. He used the ghosts of the Somme to silence the authority of the Cathedral.

The Speed of the Response.

This section uses John Sheen's regimental history to empirically prove Father Wheatley's specific claim about "rushing to answer the call." Wheatley argued that Catholic patriotism was proven by the *speed* of their enlistment (before conscription). Sheen's book contains the data that proves this was true. Father Wheatley's rebuttal in the *South Shields Gazette* hinged on a specific historical claim: that Catholics had responded generously before conscription. This assertion is rigorously supported by the military history of the region, specifically in John Sheen's definitive work, *Tyneside Irish*.

Sheen documents the extraordinary phenomenon of the 'Pals' recruitment in late 1914, noting how the Tyneside Irish Brigade raised entire battalions in a matter of days, fuelled by the very love of country that Bishop Welldon later sought to deny. Sheen's analysis confirms that the Tyneside Irish were not reluctant conscripts forced by the state, but distinct communities who mobilised voluntarily. In this light, Wheatley's 1923 sermon was not just a defence of his faith; it was a defence of the historical

record, correcting the Dean's revisionism with the hard facts of 1914.

On 24th. October 1914, the first recruitment poster appeared. By 7th. November 1914, 1052 recruits had volunteered, and the first battalion had been created.[13] The battalions undertook training during 1915 and by 12th. January 1916 the first battalions were in France.

Recruitment Figures and Demographics of Tyneside Irish Brigade.

Total Strength: Enlistments to the Tyneside Irish totalled 7,325 men.

Battalion Breakdown:

24th Battalion: 1,737

25th Battalion: 1,547

26th Battalion: 1,487

27th Battalion: 1,560

30th Battalion: 994

[13] Keating, F.E. (1917) *Irish Heroes in the War*. Dublin: Martin Lester.

Contrary to the name suggesting purely Irish origins, the majority of the men came from County Durham (59.3%), followed by Northumberland (26.7%), with only 4% coming from other parts of the UK and Ireland.[14]

Father Wheatley's challenge to Bishop Welldon was not merely rhetorical; it was rooted in the devastating statistical reality of the Tyneside Irish Brigade (the 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th Battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers). Raised explicitly from the local Catholic community, this Pals Brigade paid a disproportionate price for its patriotism, most notably on the first day of the Somme, July 1, 1916. In that single morning, the Brigade suffered 2,169 casualties out of the approximately 3,000 men who went over the top—a catastrophic loss rate of over 70% that effectively wiped out the unit as a fighting force within hours.[15]

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[14] Sheen, (1998) pp. 34-35.

[15] Sheen, J. (2010) *Tyneside Irish: 24th, 25th, 26th & 27th Battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, pp. 115–120.

By the war's end, over 2,100 Tyneside Irish soldiers had been killed in total.[16] Consequently, when Wheatley directed the Bishop to "read the long rolls of honour," he was referencing this immense blood tax, arguing that the community's loyalty had already been irrefutably proven by the thousands of dead and wounded who had fallen only a few years prior to Bishop Welldon's theoretical questioning of their citizenship.

In 1914, the maximum age for a volunteer was thirty-eight. Nevertheless, my forty-three-year-old grandfather, Jimmy McManus, volunteered together with his seventeen-year-old nephew Hughie. Both worked underground in the Durham Coalfield. They were second and third generation Irish respectively. Both practising Roman Catholics. My grandfather's parents were from County Roscommon. Although both born in County

[16] Combined Irish Regiments Association, online at: https://www.ciroca.org.uk/first-world-war-links/infantry-regiments-1914-18/tyneside-irish/
Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). (2024). *Casualty Records: Northumberland Fusiliers (24th, 25th, 26th, 27th Battalions), 1914–1918*. Online at: https://www.cwgc.org. A dynamic link which requires a search for each battalion.

Durham they had strong personal connections with Ireland. In 1914 they went together to Newcastle and joined the Northumberland Fusiliers, Tyneside Irish battalions. Like thousands of others, they had 'rushed to answer the call' long before the conscription laws referenced by Father Wheatley were enacted. Hughie's death at the Somme in 1916 serves as a permanent, tragic rebuttal to Bishop Welldon's 1923 assertion.[17] When he questioned the 'patriotism' of the Catholic community, he was effectively erasing the sacrifice of boys like Hughie, whose loyalty led them from the coal face of Durham to the unmarked graves of the Avoca Valley. Hughie's body was never found.

Father Wheatley defended the military honour of these men, but there was a darker, economic betrayal happening simultaneously that makes Bishop Welldon's insult even more bitter. The men the Bishop sneered at were the same men who fuelled the economy before and

[17] McManus, M. (2026) *Win the Coal, Win the War: Some Fragments from My Family's Battles*. Independently Published.

during the war. They were the shipyard workers, and the hewers and putters of the North East coalfields.

It is important to understand that Bishop Welldon,[18] a figure of the Anglican elite like the Bishop of Durham himself, Hensley Henson, was no stranger to controversy. He was a figure with a reputation for muscular Christianity whose outspoken views frequently landed him in hot water with both the Catholic Church and the local mining community. If Bishop Welldon had trouble with the Catholics in 1923, he found himself in actual physical danger with the miners just two years later. On July 25, 1925, during the Durham Miners' Gala, Bishop Welldon was walking near Elvet Bridge in Durham. A group of militant miners from the Chopwell lodge—often called 'Little Moscow'—mistook the Dean for the

[18] James Edward Cowell Welldon (1854–1937) was a distinguished English clergyman, scholar, and educator who served as the Dean of Durham from 1918 to 1933. Previously, he was Headmaster of Harrow (flogging Winston Churchill), Bishop of Calcutta, and Dean of Manchester. See Wikipedia at: https://www.google.com/search?q=Bishop+Welldon%2C+the+Dean+of+Durham&oq=Bishop+Welldon%2C+the+Dean+of+Durham&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBCzQ1Mzk4OTNqMGowqAIAsAIA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 Accessed 25.1.26.

despised Bishop of Durham, Hensley Henson. Henson was a vocal critic of the miners, having labelled strikes "immoral." The miners, thinking they had caught Bishop Henson, seized Bishop Welldon.

According to reports, the miners hustled Bishop Welldon to the banks of the River Wear. He was "nearly drowned" in the scuffle, losing his hat and umbrella, before being rescued by police and a local pleasure-boat operator.[19] The incident was so notorious that it was cited in Parliament the following year during a debate on the Coal Mines Bill: "Dean Welldon last summer was batting on a wet wicket and was very nearly in the River Wear".[20] The irony of Bishop Welldon's time in Durham was palpable: he was verbally battered by a priest for questioning the loyalty of Catholic soldiers, and physically battered by miners who mistook him for a different Bishop entirely.

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[19] *The Durham County Advertiser,* July 31, 1925, and *The Times,* July 27, 1925.

[20] *Hansard, House of Commons Debates,* June 30, 1926, Vol 197, cc1240.

Conclusion: The Victory of the Margin.

The South Shields Gazette noted that Wheatley corrected the wordy Dean with "dignified language." This phrasing is significant. It suggests that public sympathy in the industrial North East had shifted. The abstract, exclusionary nationalism of the Dean of Durham rang hollow in a region where the loss was so visible and shared. Father Wheatley, the priest from the industrial periphery of Willington Quay, successfully used the memory of the Tyneside Irish to claim full citizenship for his community. He proved that in the grim accounting of the Great War, a Catholic bullet wound bled just as red as an Anglican one. The spat of 1923 was, therefore, the moment the Catholic community in County Durham and Tyneside declared that their probation was over.

The 1923 dispute must also be read through the sight of post-war social fragmentation. Britain emerged from the First World War not as a united kingdom but as a society fractured along lines of class, religion, and regional identity. The industrial North East, with its shipyards, mining communities, and strong Irish Catholic presence, possessed a social fabric very different from the Anglican-

dominated South. Father Wheatley's speech resonated because it articulated a widespread resentment among working-class Catholics who felt that their wartime sacrifice had not been matched by peacetime recognition.

Furthermore, the Tyneside Irish battalions were not merely military formations; they were symbols of diasporic identity. Their catastrophic losses at the Somme meant that almost every Catholic family in County Durham and Tyneside carried personal grief. Father Wheatley's invocation of these units was therefore more than rhetoric: it was a summoning of collective trauma, mobilised as moral authority.

Bishop Welldon’s stance, by contrast, reflected the anxieties of a declining establishment. The war had democratised valour, giving working-class Catholics a form of symbolic capital the Anglican hierarchy struggled to contain. Thus, the dispute was not only about patriotism but about who had the right to narrate the meaning of the war itself.

Ribbons of Dismissal: Gender, Labour, and Social Control in the Durham Women's Land Army, 1919.

Introduction

This paper presents a micro-historical analysis of a ribbon-presentation ceremony held for the Women's Land Army (WLA) in Durham City in December 1919. By triangulating local press reports with a critical reading of the WLA's official print culture; specifically, *The Landswoman* magazine issues from August 1918 and September 1919, the paper explores how civic rituals served as mechanisms for post-war social readjustment. While ostensibly an event to honour women's wartime agricultural labour, the ceremony functioned as a vehicle for explicit conversational instructions regarding the restoration of pre-war gender hierarchies. Speakers utilised the language of "honour" to reframe unemployment as a moral virtue, and "cheerfulness" as a tool for rural stabilisation. The paper argues that the Good Service Ribbon was not merely a token of gratitude, but a symbolic 'ribbon of dismissal,' legitimising

the removal of women from the land while attempting to retain them as a passive, cheerful rural group in post war Durham.

Methodology

The paper adopts a Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to investigate the demobilisation of the Women's Land Army in County Durham. Drawing on an established framework, this method adopts the systematic integration of 'extra-linguistic' historical context into the analysis of text. Accordingly, it situates the specific communicative event, the ribbon presentation of December 4, 1919, within the broader socio-political crisis of post-war labour readjustment.[1] Using a single-case study design, the analysis treats the Durham ceremony as a 'paradigmatic case',[2] a specific local instance that reveals a wider structural phenomenon. This

[1] Wodak, R. (2015) "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)", in Wodak, R. and Meyer, M. (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. 3rd edn. London: Sage, pp. 87–122.

[2] Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research", *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), pp. 219–245. doi: 10.1177/1077800405284363.

allows for a historical analysis of the Landswoman identity, tracking how the heroic worker of 1918 was recontextualised by late 1919 into a figure defined by domesticity to fit post-war gender relations. By triangulating local civic speeches with the national institutional memory of *The Landswoman* magazine, this approach reveals how the Good Service Ribbon functioned not just as a symbol, but as a historical instrument of social control.

The Theatre of Demobilisation.

On 4 December 1919, more than a year after the Armistice silenced the guns of the Great War, a quieter but historically significant event took place in the Town Hall, Durham City. Approximately thirty members of the Women's Land Army (WLA) gathered to receive Good Service Ribbons from the Mayor of Durham and other local dignitaries. The event followed the standard grammar of British civic celebration: there were speeches praising patriotism, the pinning of awards, and a concluding tea and a dance at the Town Hall. To the casual observer, it was a simple gesture of gratitude, a

local echo of the national relief that the conflict was over. The *Stanley News and North West Durham Observer* reported:

> Durham Land Girls. 30 Good Service Ribbons Presented.
>
> In the Co-operative Hall at Durham on Friday some thirty members of the Women's Land Army in County Durham received good service ribbons. There was a large attendance of girls who had previously received the ribbon, and they were afterwards entertained to tea and a dance in the Town Hall.
>
> The Mayor (Coun. WH Wood) presided at the presentation ceremony and spoke in complimentary terms of the splendid work done by women during and since the war. He was glad to know that many of them were willing to continue serving on the land. All that was required was that life should be made a little more cheerful in order to relieve the dull monotony and then they would settle as happily in the country village as if resident in overcrowded towns and cities. He eulogised the work of Mrs Joliffe and

also of Mrs Fraser in connection with the Land Army.

The Ribbon Winners

Mrs Joliffe then presented good service ribbons to Misses C Appleby, W Barlow, E Barlow, S Barrow, Mrs ME Barker, Misses G Blenkinsopp, T Clarke, M Downs, M Drew, F Dryden, E Gale, R Haigh, J Jones, M Kent, I Marsh, M Moor, K McGeary, C McGaurd, M Nagle, M Napper, C Nutman, E Powell, J Plowman, I Pigg, L Pybus, W Robson, M Robson, E Stannard, Mrs A Thompson, Misses B Tonkin and L Trueman. Mrs Joliffe said she hoped the girls would stick at their work as they had done during the war, but where a man returned from service, she hoped that for the honour of women the girl would give up her job and allow the man to take it (Applause) However, she believed there was room for all the girls in agricultural employment.

A New Committee

Mrs Fraser the organising secretary read the scheme of the National Association of Landswomen, pointing out that a provisional

> committee had been set up to deal with the matter in the county. She wished the girls good luck and told how they had come to be appreciated by the agriculturists in the county.
> Mrs Fraser was appointed secretary of the new Association, with Miss Marshall of Spennymoor as assistant secretary. Most of the girls present intimated their intention of joining the Association.[3]

However, historical events often reveal their true structural significance in the margins of their rhetoric. Embedded within the celebratory toasts were stark, prescriptive instructions regarding the women's economic future. The keynote sentiment, delivered by Mrs. Joliffe was a moral claim: that where a returning serviceman required work, "for the honour of women the girl would give up her job and allow the man to take it". This specific phrasing, linking "honour" to voluntary

[3] The *Stanley News and North West Durham Observer* 04/12/1919 reports as quoted at: https://www.newmp.org.uk/counties/durham-land-girls-1919/ .

unemployment, transforms the Durham City ceremony from a party into a case study of post-war governance. This paper treats the ceremony, therefore, as a ritual of dismissal. By critically analysing the event discourse[4] and supporting it with evidence from the WLA's own publication, *The Landswoman*, we can see how the language of gratitude was deployed to manage a potentially volatile labour transition in the North East. The ribbon was a tangible symbol of a completed contract; it marked the moment the Landswoman was expected to revert to her pre-war public position.

Constructing the 'Landswoman': The Commodification of War Work.

To understand the ease with which these women were dismissed in 1919, we need to examine how their identity was constructed during the height of the conflict. The WLA did not just recruit workers; it chose a specific cultural identity that was patriotic, capable, but non-

[4] Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London: Longman.
Wodak, R. ibid.

threateningly feminine.[5] A reading of *The Landswoman* from August 1918 reveals the mechanisms of this construction. The primary discursive struggle in 1918 was reconciling the grime of the farmyard with the class status of the volunteers. The magazine achieved this through the commodification of the uniform. Advertisements in the August issue urge readers to purchase "Harrods Reliable Outfits," including "tailor cut breeches" and "smart farm overalls".[6] By linking agricultural labour to elite retailers like Harrods, the discourse reassured middle-and-upper-class women that war work was a fashion choice as much as a labour obligation. Similarly, advertisements for "Mayflowa War Work Boots" and "Land Outfits" framed the workwear not as industrial protective gear, but as a consumer good.[7] This commodification suggested that the Landswoman identity was something one could put on and take off—a costume

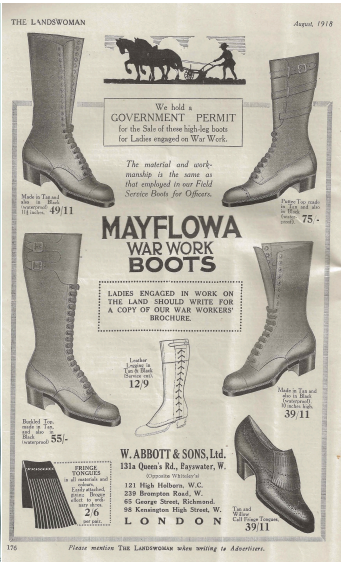
[5] White, B. (2014) *The Women's Land Army in First World War Britain*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[6] *The Landswoman*, Vol. I, No. 8, August 1918 p.174. Public Domain.

[7] *The Landswoman*, Vol. I, No. 8, August 1918 p. 176. Public Domain.

for the duration of the "emergency" rather than a permanent shift in class or professional status.

Harrods
FARM OUTFITS
AT SPECIAL PRICES
To make sure of Outfits offering good wear, real comfort and ample size—get them at Harrods. Excellently made from strong reliable material and designed by experts, these garments may be relied on to afford the highest possible satisfaction. Here are a few examples of the special offers.
KHAKI JEAN SMOCK
(F.O. 427). Excellent cloth. In 3 sizes, small, medium and large. Usual price 9/11. Special Price 7/11
HAT in Showerproof Drill. Usual price, 4/11. Special Price 3/11
BIB TROUSERS
(F.O.363). These Bib Trousers are made in Khaki, Navy or Tan Drill. For work in the garage or on the farm. Usual price 9/11. Special Price 5/11
COAT AND BREECHES
(F.O. 382.) Strong Khaki Drill, stocked in 3 sizes. Usual price, 21/6. Special Price 15/9
Also in Showerproof Drill. Usual price 34/6. Special Price 18/9
HARRODS LTD LONDON SW1


THE LANDSWOMAN
August, 1918
We hold a GOVERNMENT PERMIT for the Sale of these high-leg boots for Ladies engaged on War Work.
The material and workmanship is the same as that employed in our Field Service Boots for Officers.
49/11
75/-
MAYFLOWA
WAR WORK
BOOTS
LADIES ENGAGED IN WORK ON THE LAND SHOULD WRITE FOR A COPY OF OUR WAR WORKERS' BROCHURE.
12/9
55/-
39/11
W. ABBOTT & SONS, Ltd.
131a Queen's Rd., Bayswater, W.
121 High Holborn, W.C.
229 Brompton Road, SW.
65 George Street, Richmond.
98 Kensington High Street, W.
LONDON
39/11
176
Please mention THE LANDSWOMAN when writing to Advertisers.

Furthermore, the literature of 1918 worked to romanticise the labour, stripping it of its industrial reality.[8] In the feature "Forestry Pictures," the back-breaking work of felling timber is elevated to high art. The writer describes the workers as "Forestry Corps" but frames them in pastoral terms: The first is called, "*Foresters at Dawn*... Here

[8] Sayer, K. (1995) *Women of the fields: Representations of rural women in the nineteenth century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

come the girls flocking out from the huts... like a covey of angels, in their white smocks, between the gleam of sunshine and dew".[9]

This mystification extended to the very soil they worked. The story "Private Turnip Speaks Out" utilises a whimsical personification where vegetables discuss the war effort. A "British Queen" potato and a turnip engage in patriotic dialogue, naturalising the war effort as something supported by the earth itself.[10] By framing the work as a romantic, almost spiritual communion with nature and the nation, the WLA avoided framing it as "labour" in the trade union sense. This distinction was crucial: workers have rights and careers whereas "angels" in smocks perform acts of service that end when the service is no longer required.

A critical analysis of the illustration "Harvesting the Fruit in an English Garden"[11] vividly demonstrates the tension

[9] *The Landswoman*, Vol. I, No. 8, August 1918 p.163.

[10] *The Landswoman*, Vol. I, No. 8, August 1918 p.162.

[11] *The Sphere*, May 4, 1918. (Public Domain).

between the necessity of female labour and the anxiety regarding its social consequences.

E—HARVESTING THE FRUIT IN AN ENGLISH GARDEN

DRAWN BY S. [illegible]

[illegible] digging and planting and gathers the fruits of her labours. Against the warm-tinted brick wall an old man sits and looks with wonder, not altogether the old gentleman must perforce look on with gentle resignation at the transformations wrought by measurable war. And Eve, repeating history, tempts him with an apple

The image reveals a visual inversion of power: the 'Landswomen' are depicted as active, muscular agents dominating the frame, while the representative of the pre-war patriarchal order is reduced to a passive, seated observer, his shovel resting unused. However, the accompanying caption enacts a discursive strategy of containment. By framing the central figure as "Eve" who, "repeating history, tempts him with an apple," the text re-contextualises this labour not as professional service, but

as a dangerous, biblical disruption of the natural order. The caption notes the male figure's "gentle resignation at the transformations wrought by inexorable war," framing female independence as a temporary tragedy to be endured rather than a progressive shift to be embraced. This confirms that the logic of dismissal was already embedded in the cultural representation of the Landswoman even at the height of her mobilisation

The Friction of 1919: Political Containment in Fiction and Fact.

By September 1919, the context had shifted dramatically. The war was over, but the peace was unstable. The North East of England was a hotbed of labour unrest, and the spectre of Bolshevism loomed over Europe. The WLA's print culture reflects a nervous attempt to contain radicalism while managing the expectations of women who had tasted independence.

A critical reading of the September 1919 issue of *The Landswoman* reveals a fascinating discursive struggle between the editorial content, which promoted unity, and

the fiction, which contained the conflict.[12] The serial story "The Girl Who Lived in the Woods" features characters openly debating radical politics. One character exclaims, "I go keel zees man for ze cause of Labour!" and discusses the "Union Labour" versus "Open Shop" conflict.[13] Critical Discourse Theory suggests that magazines often use fiction to 'quarantine' dangerous ideas. By placing the arguments about socialism and violence in a made-up story, *The Landswoman* allowed its readers to consume political debate without the organisation itself having to take a stance. It acknowledged that women were now political creatures, engaged with ideas of unions and rights, but kept those ideas safely within the realm of fantasy.

In contrast to the violent radicalism in the fiction, the factual papers of 1919 began to promote a retreat into domesticity or small-scale independence. The paper "My Ideal Small Farm" details a plan for a woman to run a

[12] *The Landswoman*, Vol. II, No. 9, September 1919.

[13] *The Landswoman*, Vol. II, No. 9, September 1919 p. 214.

"farm of from sixteen to twenty acres".[14] While this suggests a desire for continued economic independence, it is a solitary, non-industrial vision—a retreat from the mass labour of the Forestry Corps to a private, manageable domestic sphere. It channels the ambition of the Landswoman away from the male-dominated labour market and into a niche of 'smallholding,' which was less threatening to the returning male workforce.

The 'Reserve Army' and the Politics of Honour

It is against this backdrop of shifting identities that the Durham City ceremony must be read. When Mrs. Joliffe appealed to the "honour of women" to justify giving up jobs, she was activating a specific mechanism of the 'Reserve Army of Labour'[15] which requires a flexible pool of workers who can be pulled into production during booms, or wars, and expelled during busts, or peace, to prevent wages from rising.[16] Women have historically

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[14] *The Landswoman*, Vol. II, No. 9, September 1919 p. 206.

[15] Beechey, V. (1977) 'Some notes on female wage labour in capitalist production', *Capital & Class*, 1(3), pp. 45–66.

[16] Bruegel, I. (1979) 'Women as a reserve army of labour: A note on recent British experience', *Feminist Review*, 3, pp. 12–23. McManus, M.

formed a key part of this reserve because their primary role is ideologically defined as domestic; their wage labour is seen as secondary or supplementary.[17]

The genius of the Durham ceremony's rhetoric was to reframe this economic expulsion as a moral victory. If women had been fired, it might have caused resentment or unrest. By framing the resignation as a matter of honour, the authorities encouraged women to internalise the logic of the reserve army. To refuse to leave would be dishonourable—an act of ingratitude toward the returning heroes.

This 'ribbon of dismissal' is physically manifested in the September 1919 magazine, which publishes lists of those awarded the Distinguished Service Bar.[18] These lists act as an inventory of *completed* labour. The ribbon pinned to the

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McManus, M. (2026) *Win the Coal, Win the War: Some Fragments from My Family's Battles*. Independently Published.

[17] Anthias, F. (1980) "Women and the reserve army of labour: A critique of Veronica Beechey", *Capital & Class*, 4(1), pp. 50–63.

[18] *The Landswoman*, Vol. II, No. 9, September 1919 p. 216.

chest in Durham was a receipt for services rendered, and a clear signal that the contract was closed.

Furthermore, the pressure to demobilise was not just economic but aesthetic. The Landswoman was being pressured to become a lady again. The September 1919 issue features an advertisement for Pomeroy Day Cream, warning women that "The woman who uses Pomeroy Day Cream regularly need have no fears regarding her complexion... otherwise the skin becomes coarse, red, and rough".[19] The subtext is powerful: the rough, capable hands that pulled flax or felled timber were no longer the ideal. The post-war woman was expected to be soft, decorative, and domestic.

[19] *The Landswoman*, Vol. II, No. 9, September 1919 p. 218. Public Domain.

Britain's Women Workers
need to protect the complexion, otherwise the skin becomes coarse, red, and rough, and the face unattractive.
The woman who uses Pomeroy Day Cream regularly need have no fears regarding her complexion. Just a dab of Pomeroy Day Cream once or twice a day will keep your complexion clear, your skin soft and supple, and prevent those blemishes which so often follow exposure to all kinds of weather.
Pomeroy Day Cream
In dainty half-crown vases, at high-class Chemists, Perfumers, &c.
Mrs. Pomeroy, Ltd., 29, Old Bond Street, LON DON, W.

The Gospel of Cheerfulness: Governing the Rural Soul.

The Durham ceremony addressed a second, equally pressing anxiety: the stability of the rural population. In his speech, the Mayor of Durham did not focus on the economics of farming, but on its dull monotony. He explicitly linked this boredom to the depopulation of the countryside, fearing it drove young people to "overcrowded towns and cities". His charge to the Landswomen was to make rural life "a little more cheerful". This is an expectation to show the right emotions. The women were being tasked with emotional labour. They were to be the social glue that held the

village together, preventing the rural working class from becoming too dissatisfied or too radicalised.[20]

This 'gospel of cheerfulness' permeates the WLA's post-war output. The paper "Our Flax Camp" in September 1919 describes the gruelling conditions of a harvest camp. The writer notes "Blisters, thistle prickles, and strained wrists," yet immediately pivots to the claim that "The village of C—— really owes a great debt of gratitude to the flax pullers... the village place looks so cheerful and gay". The physical pain of the labour is acknowledged but subsumed under the imperative to be jolly.[21] Similarly, the "Kodak" advertisement in the same issue urges women to "Save your happy memories... Nothing tells the story like a Kodak".[22]

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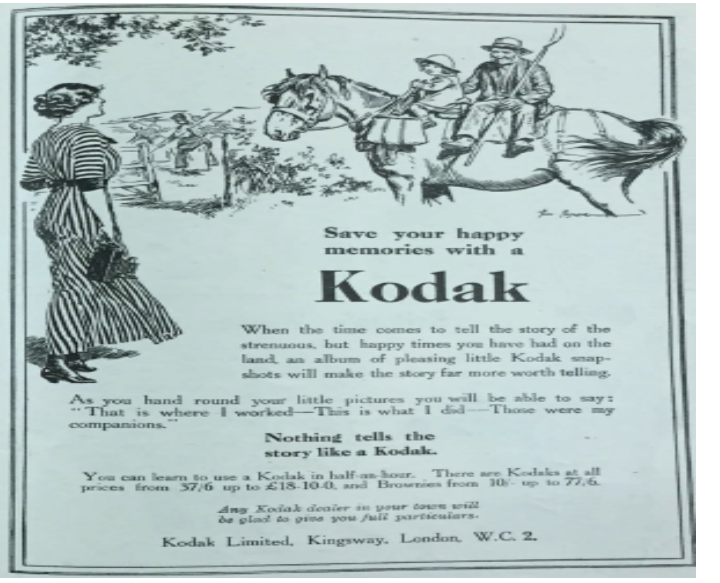
[20] Foucault, M. (1991) 'Governmentality', in Burchell, G., Gordon, C. and Miller, P. (eds) *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

[21] *The Landswoman*, Vol. II, No. 9, September 1919 p. 210.

[22] *The Landswoman*, Vol. II, No. 9, September 1919 p. 217. Public Domain.


Save your happy
memories with a
Kodak
When the time comes to tell the story of the strenuous, but happy times you have had on the land, an album of pleasing little Kodak snapshots will make the story far more worth telling.
As you hand round your little pictures you will be able to say: "That is where I worked—This is what I did—Those were my companions."
Nothing tells the
story like a Kodak.
You can learn to use a Kodak in half-an-hour. There are Kodaks at all prices from 37/6 up to £18-10-0, and Brownies from 10/- up to 77/6.
Any Kodak dealer in your town will be glad to give you full particulars.
Kodak Limited, Kingsway, London, W.C. 2.

This advertisement engages in a rewriting of history. It encourages women to manage their experience of the war not as a time of hardship, labour struggles, or independence, but as a series of "pleasing little Kodak snapshots". It reduces the revolutionary shift of women entering agriculture to a nostalgic holiday album, rendering it safe and distant.

Institutional Transition: From Army to Association.

Finally, the Durham ceremony marks a shift in institutional power. The report mentions the formation of a county committee under the "National Association of

Landswomen". This mirrors a national shift described in the magazine, where the Women's Branch of the Board of Agriculture, a State body, was transitioning into voluntary associations.[23] The "Club Page" in the August 1918 issue indicates this, highlighting "Sewing Clubs" where girls make baskets and knit, rather than organising for wages.[24] By 1919, the push was to move women out of the sphere of state employment and into the sphere of voluntary, leisure-based association. The Good Service Ribbon was the badge of this transfer. It marked the end of the woman as a state employee and her rebirth as a private citizen who might occasionally help out at a village fête.

Conclusion

The 1919 Good Service Ribbon ceremony in Durham City was a sophisticated piece of social theatre. It successfully navigated the dangerous waters of demobilisation by wrapping the hard facts of

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[23] White, B. (2021) 'A Better England: Women's agricultural labour and the National Association of Landswomen, 1919–1923', *Agricultural History Review*, 69(2), pp. 255–273.

[24] *The Landswoman*, Vol. I, No. 8, August 1918 p.172.

unemployment in the soft language of gratitude. The analysis of the local event, supported by the national print culture of *The Landswoman*, reveals a consistent strategy. The 'Landswoman' identity, constructed through Harrods advertisements and romanticised forestry pictures, was designed to be temporary. When the war ended, the Reserve Army logic was activated through the code of 'honour,' compelling women to step aside for men. Simultaneously, the 'governance of cheerfulness' attempted to repurpose their energy to stabilise a monotonous and depopulating countryside.

In the Town Hall in Durham City the Land Girls were celebrated, fed, danced with, and dismissed. The Good Service Ribbon was a genuine badge of pride for the individuals who wore it, but for the historian, it remains a 'ribbon of dismissal'—a silken barrier erected to ensure that the gender revolution of the First World War went no further than the farm gate.

The Mitre, The Migrant and The Map: The Science of Police and the Control of the Dangerous Classes in Victorian Durham City.

Introduction.

To understand the evolution of order in Durham City, I begin with a violation of its sanctuary. Back in the heady, trusting days of the 1980s, the doors to St. Oswald's Church in Durham City stood wide open - a symbol of faith that ultimately invited a crime of opportunity. Exploiting this naivety, a thief slipped inside, stripped the altar of its silver crucifix and candlesticks, and vanished. I was then serving as a Detective Constable with the Durham Constabulary - the City CID's back-shift officer on the scene. As the vicar described the characteristics and provenance of the missing items, I realised I had a historical connection to the crime. He recounted how, following the disbandment of the Durham City Borough Police in 1921, the old uniforms were surrendered to the Durham City Corporation. In a symbolic act of transfiguration, the silver buttons were cut from the

tunics, melted down, and recast into the holy icons now missing from the altar.[1] This physical transformation of police buttons into religious symbols is more than a historical curiosity; it serves as a perfect metaphor for the unique nature of authority in Durham City. In this city, the line between the 'Queen's Peace' and the 'Peace of God' has always been blurred. For centuries, the Prince Bishops of Durham wielded the *jus gladii* - the "right of the sword" - holding the power of life and death alongside the crozier of the church.[2] It is fitting, then, that the metal which once fastened the uniform of state power was transformed into an ultimate symbol of moral authority. Merely figuratively of course, police officer's tunics and priest's vestments might be seen to be cut from the same cloth.

[1] Durham County Record Office, PU/DU.50, pp. 276-281. St. Oswald's Church Inventory Documents. The inventory itemises the altar crucifix and candlesticks, identifying them as made from the white metal buttons of Durham Police.

[2] McManus. M. (2025) *The Bureaucratisation of Grace: A Foucauldian Analysis of Sanctuary at Durham Cathedral.* Independently Published.

The Stolen Altar Furniture (Public Domain)

Once the thief was arrested and the icons retrieved from a scrap car in Tyneside, the police work was done. My curiosity, however, was just waking up. Fascinated by the silver and its backstory, I felt compelled to look beyond the surface and truly understand the history of the old Durham City force. Accordingly, I visited the Durham County Record Office, only to find a silence far more troubling than an empty church altar. Most records of the Durham City Borough Police had been destroyed, leaving only a scant register of arrests from 1863 and a few annual reports.

The destruction of these records was a far graver crime than the theft of the silver. The silver was merely an

artefact; the records represented the lost discourse of an age. However, a chance encounter I had with a council workman revealed that I was not too late to save one final fragment. The Council had ordered the clearance of an abandoned building in Claypath—the old city police station—and instructed workmen to burn any documents found there. One workman, recognising the value of the copperplate handwriting, secretly spared a single book from the incinerator. It was a register of 'beat complaints' from 1860 to 1871. (Hereafter referred to as 'The Rescued Beat Complaint Register'). This rescued volume allows us to reconstruct the "Science of Police" in Victorian Durham

Theoretical Framework: The Science of Police.

To understand the contents of this register, we need to look beyond the simple catching of thieves and adopt the perspective of the Science of Police, a concept articulated by Pasquino and rooted in Foucault's analyses of power. In the nineteenth century, 'police' referred to 'administration' in its broadest sense. It was a "cluster of practices and knowledge" embedded in the social field, designed to regulate the population and ensure the

prosperity of the state.[3] In Victorian Durham, this science manifested as a dual system of control. Firstly, the Police of Crime and Disorder: the uniformed constabulary. Secondly, the Police of Public Utilities: the sanitary inspectors and boards of health. Both were instruments of a new administrative culture aimed at managing the dangerous classes — in particular, the residents of The Slum—to protect the interests of the sacred area of The Peninsula.

Methodology.

Adopting a micro-historical methodology[4], this paper focuses on the archival footprints of three pivotal officers between 1848 and 1868: Superintendent William Robison, Superintendent William Beard, and Sergeant Robert Ruddick. These figures are examined not merely as

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[3] Pasquino, P. (1978) 'Theatrum Politicum. The Genealogy of Capital - Police and the State of Prosperity', *Ideology and Consciousness*, 4, pp. 41-54.

Foucault, M. (1975) *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison.* New York, Pantheon.

[4] Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books. (Specifically, the chapter "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture").

functionaries, but as archetypes of a changing order. Robison's role as Inspector of Weights, Measures, and Lodgings illustrates the integration of early policing with civil and sanitary administration - Medical Police. Conversely, the internal conflict between Superintendent Beard and Sergeant Ruddick reveals the friction inherent in the way the force, as the informal culture of the traditional Watch clashed with the rigid discipline of the New Police. Drawing on the General Orders Register, Beat Complaints Register from 1860–1871and Census Data, I reconstruct how the police became the new garrison of the Peninsula, tasked with defending the sacred silence of the Cathedral against the clamour of the slums below. I demonstrate how the Durham Borough Police were transformed into domestic missionaries[5], tasked and dispatched by the propertied classes to impose a sanitary and moral geometry upon the chaos of the immigrant slum.

[5] Storch, R. D. (1976). "The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880." *Journal of Social History*, 9(4), 481-509.

The Mitre and The Peninsula: The Fortress of the Elite.

'The Peninsula' - the area of Durham City containing the Cathedral, Castle, and Baileys - was surrounded by the River Wear, acting as a natural fortress. Historically, at an early phase, it defended against the Scots; in the Victorian era, it defended against the Dangerous Classes. When the 'New Police' arrived in Durham City in 1836, they stepped into a city where social control was already a spiritual enterprise. Indeed, the local press scoffed at the idea that mere constables kept the peace, attributing the city's tranquillity to its ecclesiastical heavyweights:

> It is a singular fact that out of more than fifty prisoners tried at our last Assizes but one - and that for an assault merely - had been committed from this city. How will the radicals account for so small an amount of crime in an episcopal city? ...demoralised by the residence of a Dean, twelve Prebandaries, minor Cannons etc. etc.?[6]

[6] Durham Advertiser, Sixteenth March 1838.

In 1851, the population of the Peninsula Parishes was 513. The residents were the ecclesiastical and social elite. At the College lived the Very Reverend Dean George Waddington and Venerable Archdeacon Thorpe. In South Bailey lived John Church Backhouse, a member of the renowned Quaker banking family [7]. The Backhouse family typifies the "Palatinate" power. While philanthropic, advocating for "Ragged Schools" to educate the poor, his world was sealed off from them. Ties of kinship established with the Barclay, Birkbeck, Chapman, Church, Fox, Hoare, and Hodgkin families consolidated the Backhouses' position in the country's Quaker banking and business network[8] The great economic power of the Backhouse family was substantial because they had very strong links, through family and religion, to the most important national banks.[9]

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[7] 1851 Census of England and Wales, Durham City. Butler, D. (1992) *Durham City. The 1851 Census,* Durham Historical Enterprises.

[8] McCollum, M. 1973 *The Backhouse Papers*, GB-0033-BAC. Available online at: http://flambard.dur.ac.uk:6336/dynaweb/handlist/fam/bkhouse/

[9] Banham, J. (1994) 'A very great public conveniency: The origins of banking in County Durham', *Durham County Local History Society Bulletin,* 52, May:19-41, p. 32.

The statistics of life and death reveal the effectiveness of this fortress. Between 1841 and 1851, the annual death rate in the College area, fifty yards from the cathedral, was just 13.7 per 1,000 [10]. The police became the new garrison of this fortress. Their duty was to patrol the boundaries of the "half church of God, half castle against the Scot", ensuring that the chaos of the tenements did not spill over into the sacred silence of the Cathedral precincts.

The Migrant: The Slum and the Dangerous Classes.

In stark contrast to the Peninsula lay "The Slum," epitomised by areas like Framwellgate and Water Lane. If the Peninsula was the seat of the "Palatinate" power, the Slum was the home of the plebians—specifically the Irish immigrants fleeing the Great Famine. By 1861, County Durham had a higher proportion of Irish-born residents (5.4%) than any English county outside the North West of England. [11]

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[10] Shaw, G. (1868) 'A Statistical Table of the Mortality of the City of Durham: For Eighteen Years and Three Months, ending the 31st. March 1859'. DCRO D/CL 1.

[11] Census of England and Wales, 1861.

These immigrants came largely from the poorest province of Connaught—counties Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, and Leitrim. They emigrated from a region characterised by meagre land allotments and severe famine. In Durham City, they found new misery. In Framwellgate, the death rate was 27.0 per 1,000, as compared with 13.7 on the Peninsula. The census allows us to meet these residents, humanising the danger that the police were tasked to watch:

Hugh Sheridan: A labourer from Manorhamilton, Leitrim, living at 24b Silver Street with his wife Bridget and infant son James.

James Gilroy: A master shoemaker from Leitrim, living in Sherburn Road with his son Thomas.

The Killion Family: Living at 57d Hallgarth Street, housing lodgers like John and Bridget McManus from Roscommon.

These families were survivors of a catastrophe, yet in Durham, they were viewed with suspicion. The Victorian media and society constructed a 'Moral Panic' around the Irish, stereotyping them as "drunken, violent, dishonest,

and dirty". Local newspapers fuelled this narrative. A report in the *Durham County Advertiser* on a meeting in the Town Hall exemplifies this:

> .....the audience being almost entirely composed of Irish residents of this city and surrounding districts, the garb and general exterior of whom were unmistakable evidence as to the land of their nativity.....[12]

[12] Durham County Advertiser, 18th January 1861.

The above images from Punch Magazine, depicts an early species of Anarchic Celt threatening the young girl Hibernia, protected by Britannia while Police in the battle against the Fenians are helped by the Irish.[13] The implication is clear: to be Irish was to be different and to be different was to be deviant. However, a forensic analysis of census and court records challenges this panic. In 1861, the Irish-born population of Durham City was about 6.4%. In the Petty Sessional Court records for that year, Irish defendants accounted for 12.4% of charges. While this indicates they were over-represented, it is not the tidal wave of criminality the media suggested. Furthermore, 50% of theft cases involving Irish defendants were dismissed by magistrates.[14]

The criminality that did exist in Durham was largely "drunkenness and disorderliness"—symptoms of social dislocation rather than inherent vice. Yet, the police were explicitly instructed to treat them as a political threat. By

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[13] Gilley, S. (1985) 'The Irish' in *History Today,* vol.35: 16-23. 1985:21.

[14] Durham Petty Sessional Court Charge Book, 1865-1862. Durham County Record Office, PS/DU//1/2.

1867, following Fenian scares, Chief Constable George Francis White of Durham County Constabulary issued a confidential order:

> ...the Chief Constable directs that each Superintendent will tell off a sufficient number of sergeants... to watch, for the present, the Irish population... such duty to be conducted in such a manner as, if possible, not to attract attention.[15]

Superintendents were issued with "revolver pistols" and "cutlasses" to deal with this perceived threat. The police were not just crime-fighters; they were a domestic intelligence agency monitoring a specific ethnic group.

The Map: Making the City Legible.

The 'Map' is a crucial metaphor and literal tool in the Science of Police because it is fundamentally about rendering a chaotic city 'legible' to the state. Before the Science of Police, the city was a confusing warren of alleyways and courts where the poor could hide. The job

[15] *Durham County Constabulary General Order Book*. Durham County Record Office, CCP 32, p. 211.

of the New Police was to create a mental and physical map of these hidden spaces. Superintendent Robison's register of 24 Common Lodging Houses and 99 Public Houses was essentially a ‘Coordinates of Vice’ map. By listing them, numbering them, and inspecting them, he turned the private, hidden world of the dangerous classes into a mapped public space. You cannot police what you cannot locate.

This mapping extended into the ‘Police of Public Utilities,’ or what Foucault called the "medicine of spaces".[16] Medical officers like Dr. Oliver and Dr. Watkin viewed the poor's high mortality rates as a moral failing, blaming "vicious habits" and "imprudent marriages". The solution was surveillance codified in strict regulations, such as the 1854 rules for Common Lodging Houses. These rules, confirmed by Prime Minister Palmerston, created a ‘Lodging House Police’ with invasive powers:

[16] Foucault, M. (1963) *The Birth of the Clinic*, London: Tavistock. In the text, this concept is discussed in the context of how the study of disease moved toward an interest in the environment and the medicalisation of spaces.

1. **Capacity:** Keepers had to display a ticket showing the maximum number of lodgers allowed.
2. **Segregation:** Children of opposite sexes could not share a room unless married.
3. **Ventilation:** Windows had to be kept open to the full width from 9am-11am and 2pm-4pm, regardless of the weather.
4. **Hygiene:** Floors had to be washed every Friday before 12 midday.
5. **Limewashing:** Walls had to be whitewashed four times a year.[17]

The Irish were heavily targeted by these rules. Of the 73 registered lodging houses in 1855, 27 were run by Irish-named keepers, mostly in Framwellgate. For example, Edward Kelly ran a house in Water Lane where the police measured every room to calculate the exact cubic footage of air available to each sleeper.[18]

[17] Durham County Record Office, Durham City Council, Local Authority Records, Common Lodging Houses, Du3/14/1.

[18] Ibid.

The Discipline of the Machine: Bureaucracy vs. Tradition.

To enforce this scientific order, the police force itself had to be transformed into a disciplined machine. The rescued beat complaints register reveals that the 'Science of Police' was applied internally as well as externally. Adopting a micro-historical methodology, we focus on the archival footprints of three pivotal officers between 1848 and 1868: Superintendent William Robison, Superintendent William Beard, and Sergeant Robert Ruddick.

Superintendent William Beard, who commanded the force in the 1860s, represents the bureaucratic discipline of the new age. He used the rescued beat complaints register to chastise his men, writing scathingly about those who "dislike the nature of Police Duties".[19] Beard's goal was to create a force that was detached and professional - a human wall between the Slum and the Peninsula.

[19] 30th. May 1864. In consequence of PC 9 Isaac Brown having resigned.

This new discipline clashed with the Old Watch culture, personified by Sergeant Robert Ruddick. Ruddick represents the traditional, fraternal style of policing that relied on local knowledge and informality. However, in the eyes of the Science of Police, such familiarity was a weakness. A policeman who gossiped with the locals could not, for example, effectively police the alien Irish population. Ruddick's dismissal in November 1864 for "childish nonsense" and insubordination reveals the anxiety of the Watch Committee. He had been "tampering with the men," asking if the Superintendent was "drunk", and claiming, "I am keeping a book against that gentleman... I will let him see who is the master here".[20] Ruddick represents the insubordinate character who might share a drink with an Irishman in a Framwellgate pub rather than arrest him.

This drive for detachment is further illustrated by an incident involving Catherine Gilbertson. On April 18th, 1864, she complained that P.C. 10 had "attempted to

[20] 23rd. November 1864. Robert Ruddick having been discharged from this force for insubordination to the Superintendent and other misconduct.

search her by feeling to her bosom and putting his hand to her underclothing."[21] Superintendent Beard's response was immediate and absolute: he ordered that "no officer will attempt to search any female under any circumstances whatever". Beard's order was a defensive measure to protect the moral legitimacy of the state. Robert Storch argued that the Victorian police were 'domestic missionaries' - agents sent to impose moral order on the working class. To do this, they had to be seen as morally superior to the people they policed.[22] If a police officer is seen touching a woman, he loses his moral authority. By forbidding physical contact, Beard ensured that the police remained observers of the population[23] rather than participants in its physical chaos.

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[21] Rescued Beat Complaints Register.

[22] Storch, R. D. (1976). "The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban Discipline and Popular Culture in Northern England, 1850-1880." *Journal of Social History*, 9(4), 481-509.

[23] Foucault, M. (1975) *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. New York, Pantheon.

Policing for the Bourgeoisie.

The rescued 'beat complaints' register offers the most damning evidence of who the "New Police" were actually serving. The Classicist view suggests the police benefited all classes equally. The register suggests otherwise. An analysis of the complainants reveals a stark class divide. Of the 204 complaints where occupation was recorded:

65 were Businessmen
27 were Lawyers
19 were Titled Persons
15 were Councillors
14 were Clergymen
Zero were Labourers or Miners.[24]

The working class were the objects of policing, not its consumers. They did not call the police; the police were called *on* them. The complaints themselves were rarely about serious crime. They were about imposing bourgeois

[24] Durham City Borough Police, Recovered Register of Beat Complaints from 1860 to 1871.

order on working-class leisure. The register is filled with complaints about:

> **Street Games:** The Recorder complained of children "bowling hoops" and "playing at ball" in Framwellgate.
> **Gambling:** Mr. Linsey of New Elvet complained of young men playing "pitch and toss" on Sundays.
> **Indecency:** The Governor of the County Prison complained of young men "running foot races naked" in Maiden Castle Woods.
> **Obstruction:** Mr. Wharton of Dryburn complained that the police were "careless inefficient men" for failing to stop children riding behind carriages.[25]

The police were effectively street-sweepers for capitalism, ensuring that the highways remained clear for commerce and that the sensibilities of the rich were not offended by the 'nuisance' of the poor.

[25] Durham City Borough Police, Recovered Register of Beat Complaints from 1860 to 1871.

William Robison (centre) Superintendent of Police Durham City 1848-57 (Public Domain).

Durham City Police Officers about 1850. PC William Beuglass is standing second on the left (Public Domain).

Conclusion.

The history of policing in Victorian Durham is not merely a chronicle of constables and criminals; it is a spatial and administrative drama played out between the sacred heights of the Peninsula and the profane depths of the Slum. Through the theoretical lens of the Science of Police, we can see that the transition from the Prince Bishop's sword to the policeman's truncheon was not a break with the past, but a reconfiguration of it.

The "Mitre" established the moral imperative: the city was a sanctuary that had to be kept holy. The "Map" provided the modern, bureaucratic tools to enforce this sanctity, rendering the chaotic lives of the "Migrant" legible, measurable, and controllable. Superintendent Beard's dismissal of Sergeant Ruddick and his prohibition on physical contact with women were not just disciplinary measures; they were the actions of an administrator calibrating a machine to ensure it could function as a detached instrument of this new order. Ultimately, the melted silver buttons of 1921 tell the final part of this story. By transforming the symbols of state coercion back into the symbols of religious grace, the authorities

inadvertently revealed the truth at the heart of the Science of Police: in Durham, the governance of the city and the cure of souls were always two sides of the same coin. The police were the secular clergy of a new industrial age, tasked with imposing a moral geometry on a disorderly world, ensuring that even if the Dangerous Classes could not be saved, they could at least be contained.

Epilogue: From Relics to Responsibilisation.

The legacy of the Science of Police remains. Giddens writes that in a post-traditional order, institutions do not disappear; they become "relics" or "shell institutions" but they still remain[26]. As a young recruit joining the Durham Constabulary in 1971, I entered a world that still revered the "relic" of the traditional detective. We viewed ourselves as autonomous guardians, the elite 'guardians of the figures', separate from the uniformed branch and deeply embedded in an occupational culture of 'mystery and mastery'. Today, the language of policing has changed. We speak of 'Community Safety Partnerships'

[26] Giddens, A. (1994) *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press.

and the ‘responsibilisation’ of the public. The Scottish police emblem "Together" and the Durham Police motto "Better Together" suggest a democratic, shared responsibility for order. Yet, the core dynamic established in 1836 persists. The Science of Police—the administration of the population, the management of nuisance and the protection of property—is still the operating system of the state. The register of 1860 tells a story of a divided city where the police served the Peninsula against the Slum. As we look at the modern landscape of surveillance cameras and anti-social behaviour orders, we must ask: to what extent has that really changed? The silver buttons may be gone, melted into crucifix and candlesticks, but the iron grip of the administration remains the same.

By the same author:

McManus, M. (2026) *Win the Coal, Win the War: Some Fragments from My Family's Battles*. Independently Published.

McManus, M. (2026) *From Fate to Choice: Private Bobbies, Public Beats*. London: Routledge.

McManus, M. (2025) *Stigmata and Other Signs: Short Stories and Verse*. Independently published.

McManus, M. (2024) *The State or the Market? An Evaluation of Private Security Patrol in Public Residential Areas of the United Kingdom*. Independently published.

McManus, M. (2023) *From Townland to Township: The Complex Evolution of a Dissipative Famine-Irish Community in County Durham*. Independently published.

McManus, M. (2023) *The Palatinate, the Peninsular and the Slum: The Science of Police in Victorian Durham*. Independently published.

McManus, M. (2023) *Genes and Septs Reunited: History and Genetics Synthesized in the Families of McManus and O'Conor of Connaught, Ireland.* Independently published.

McManus, M. (2023) *Shout it Out! Well Versed Reflections and Images.* Independently published.

McManus, M. (2023) *A Thousand Words: Images, Flash Stories and Free Verse.* Independently published.

McManus, M. (1995) *From Fate to Choice: Private Bobbies, Public Beats.* Aldershot: Avebury.

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Michael McManus was born in 1946 in Durham City, UK. He has led a distinguished and varied career, serving for fifty years in Public Service. He served as an Airman in the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm during the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1971, he joined the Durham Constabulary, dedicating nearly three decades to policing before retiring in 1999 and transitioning to academia at Durham University, where he taught Sociology and Criminology in a part-time capacity from 1999 to 2015 and was module leader in the Policing Module and the Researching Crime Module. He has researched the relationship between private policing and public policing in public residential areas. He has written textbooks such as "From Fate to Choice: Private Bobbies, Public Beats" and "The State or the Market? An Evaluation of Private Security Patrol in Public Residential Areas of The United Kingdom. He was awarded a BA (Hons) Degree from New College, Durham and a PhD from Durham University. He holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning from Durham University.